FROM THE MAKERS OF METAL HAMMER

NEW

STARRING

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SLIPKNOT • SYSTEM OF A DOWN • INCUBUS • PAPA ROACH • DISTURBED

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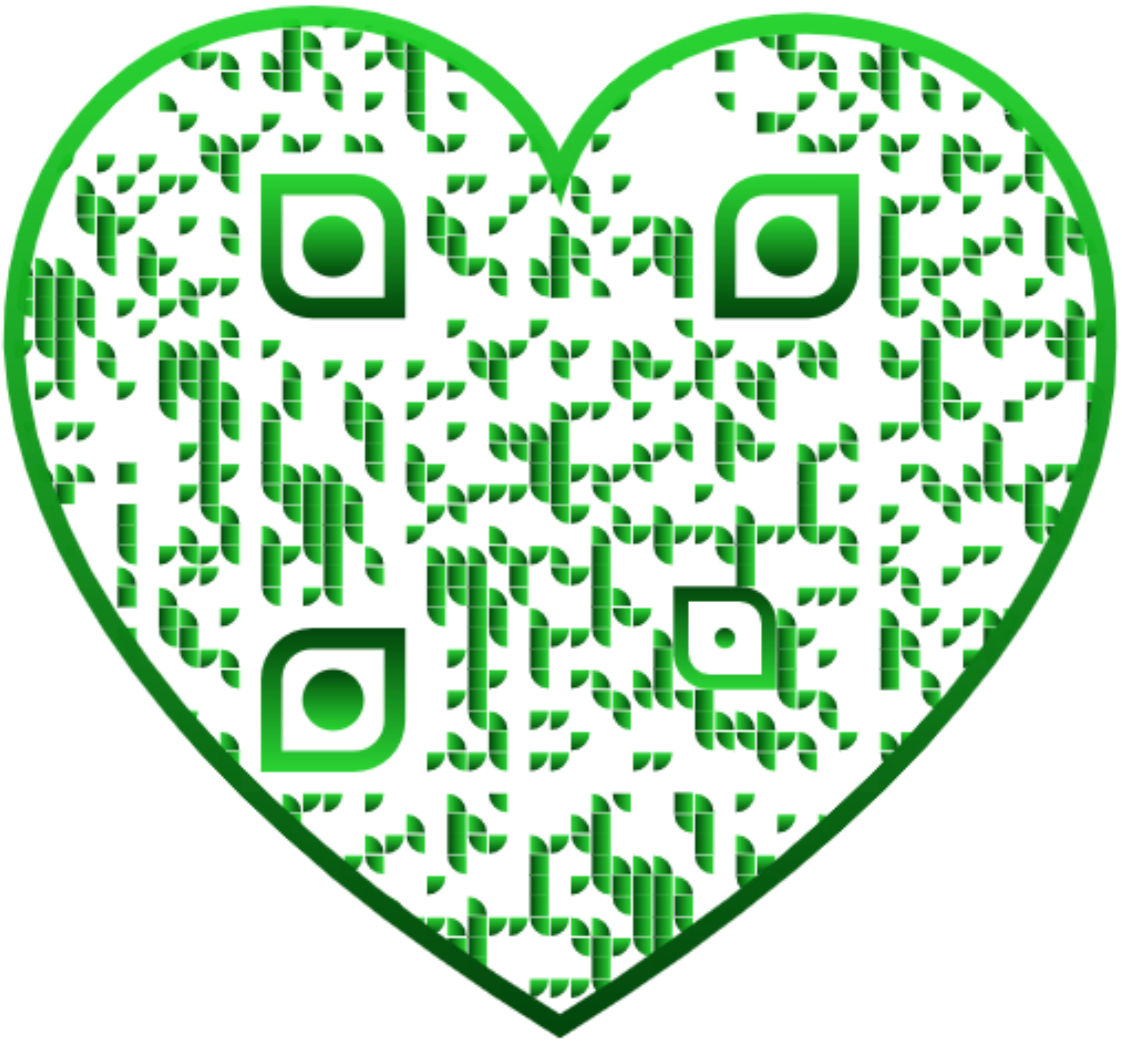

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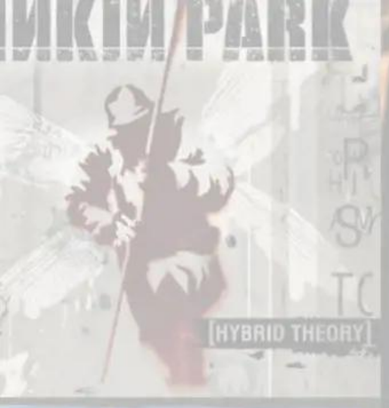
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Slipknot

korn

P.O.D.
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Korn
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SEVENDUST
Animosity

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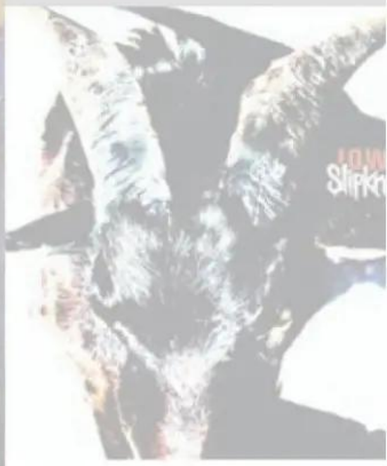
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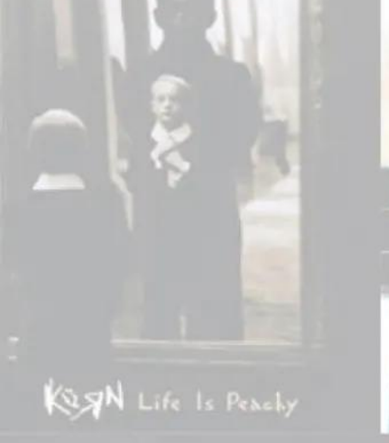
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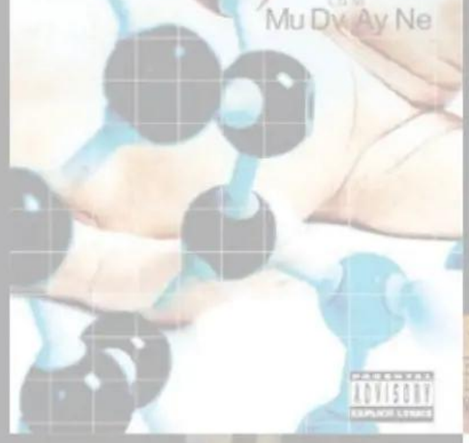
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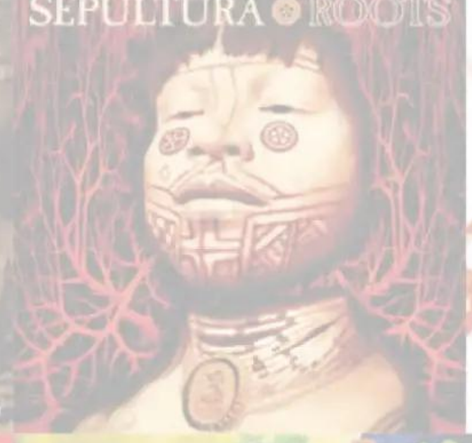
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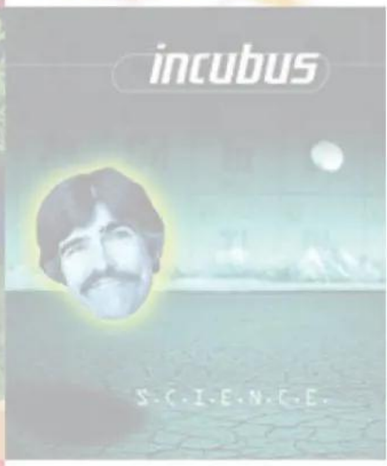
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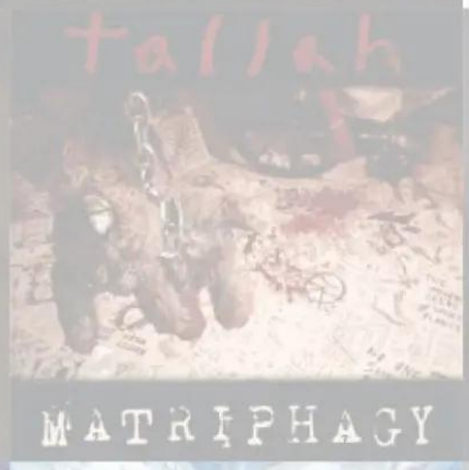
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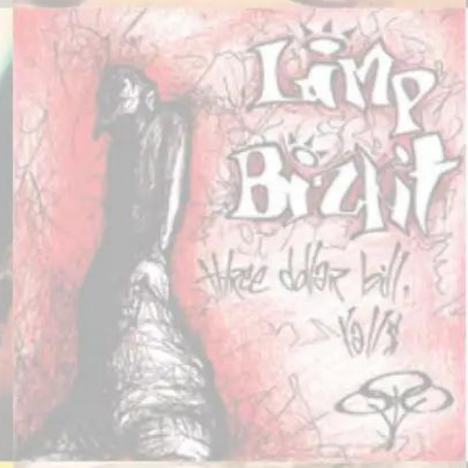
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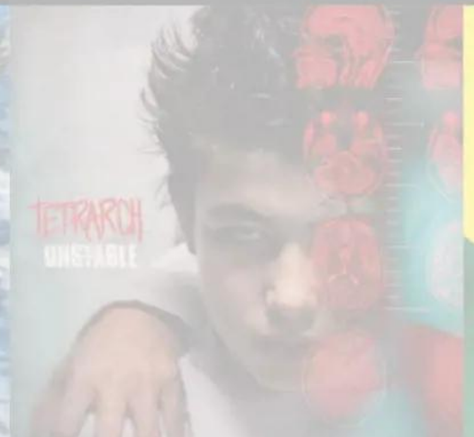
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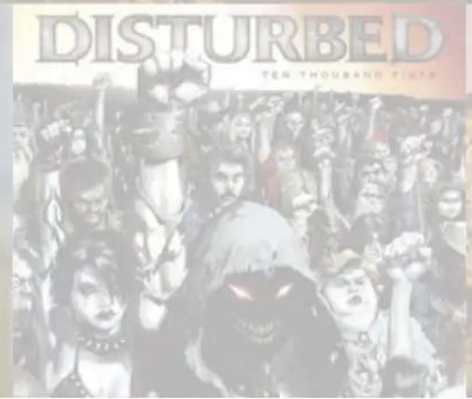
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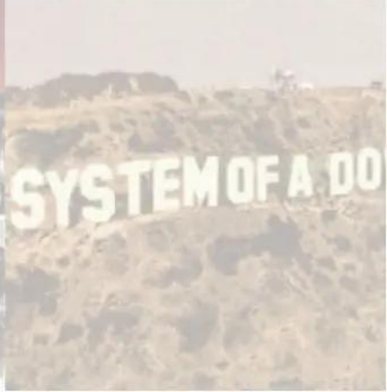
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IF GRUNGE RULED the first half of the 1990s, the second half belonged to nu metal. Taking the best of metal, hip hop and anything else they found lying around, the likes of Korn, Deftones, Limp Bizkit, System Of A Down and Linkin Park forged a brand new mutant strain of music that swept all before it, selling records by the million and dragging the entire metal scene into a brand new era. The critics hated it, of course. But then, what the hell do critics know anyway?

I first saw Korn live when they played to 800 people in London on their very first UK tour in 1995, and it was like little else that had come before it (bagpipes in metal? What lunacy is this?). It was thrilling to watch the scene they created snowball over the next few years, from Deftones' genre-warping acrobatics to Limp Bizkit's fratboy hijinks to the arrival of System Of A Down and Linkin Park, who proved that the scene was capable of reinventing itself over and over again.

This special magazine from the makers of *Metal Hammer* captures the excitement of nu metal from its birth in the early 1990s to its current, much-deserved resurrection. You'll find classic interviews with the scene's key players and the stories behind its biggest albums and greatest songs, all taken from the pages of *Metal Hammer*. And there's also a rundown of the 50 greatest nu metal albums ever, as voted by you, the fans.

So, in the immortal words of Korn's Jonathan Davis: are you *rrrrready*?

Dave Everley – Editor

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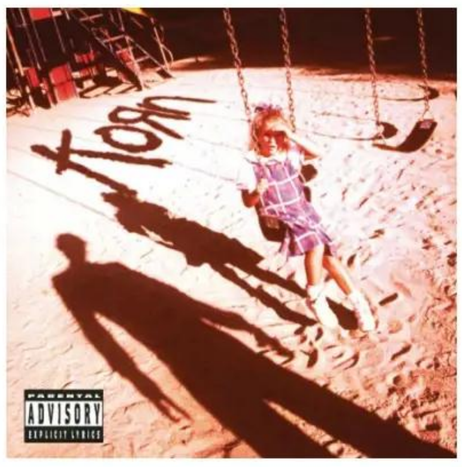

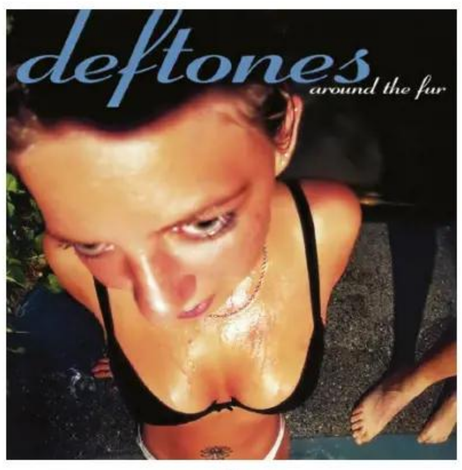

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MADE IN AMERICA

The 90s were responsible for some of the freakiest sights and sounds in metal history. Limp Bizkit frontman Fred Durst and Coal Chamber singer Dez Fafara guide us through the chaotic birth and dizzying rise of nu metal

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

Limp Bizkit's Fred Durst and Korn's Jonathan Davis: two of nu metal's founding fathers

GETTY

ON OCTOBER 27, 1995, a rising band from Bakersfield, California, played the final gig of their very first British tour at London's LA2 club. Their self-titled debut album had caused a minor stir among the country's more clued-up rock fans, 800 of whom were here tonight.

Their name was Korn, and if they weren't an entirely unknown quantity, then they certainly counted as dark horses. Especially singer Jonathan Davis, a former mortuary assistant, who whispered, gibbered and shrieked his way through a set of songs about insecurity, sexual identity, childhood bullying, and child abuse.

Korn sounded like nothing else. They took the rap-metal of Faith No More, Rage Against The Machine and the Red Hot Chili Peppers and twisted it into unrecognisable shapes. Guitars were downtuned, lyrics were several shades of nasty and they even busted out a set of bagpipes. It was the sound of tomorrow.

Within a couple of years, the scene they spearheaded would be the biggest noise in rock. The bands who came in their wake were an unholy collection of misfits, weirdos and dead animal-huffing madmen. This movement would soon be branded nu metal. But really, it was the sound of the lunatics taking over the asylum.

LOS ANGELES WAS dead in the early 90s. Hair metal was gasping its last, Aquanet-choked breath, and the snooty grunge hipsters who had stepped into the breach wouldn't be seen dead on the Sunset Strip. Instead it was left to a bunch of unknown local bands to build something from the ground up.

One of these bands was Coal Chamber, whose singer Dez Fafara loved punk and 80s synth-pop. When Coal Chamber started in 1994, they played standard-issue alt-rock. It was only when they decided to downtune their guitars that they noticed other bands doing a similar thing.

"In '92 or '93, the clubs weren't happening, nobody was playing them," says Dez. "But then you started seeing Coal Chamber, Deftones, System Of A Down creeping into these places. Korn would bring busloads of people up from Orange County. Everybody had to sound different and look different. We went from wearing Dickies and having our hair braided to getting way more in touch with our goth side. That's why we dressed so crazy."

At the same time, something was stirring down in the swamps of Florida. Fronted by sometime tattoo artist Fred Durst, Limp Bizkit were creating waves in Jacksonville. More explicitly indebted to hip hop than most of the bands in California, their singer nevertheless wore his outsider status on his sleeve.

"We were the black sheep – or the white sheep," says Fred. "Not quite hip hop, not quite metal. But we didn't give a fuck, and we tried to say that fairly blatantly. That was one of the things that became dislikable about us."

Limp Bizkit may have been based 3,000 miles from Los Angeles, but they became honorary members of this new fraternity of misfits after Fred pressed his band's demo into Korn's hand when they played Jacksonville.

They jumped on board at the right time. The scene was gaining traction: Korn released their debut album in October 1994; Deftones' debut, *Adrenaline*, followed a year later. The scene gained further momentum when Sepultura released their visionary *Roots* album in early 1996: the track Cutaway featured Korn's Jonathan Davis and DJ Lethal of the then-unknown Limp Bizkit alongside the unwitting scene godfather, Mike Patton of Faith No More. By the time Limp Bizkit released their own debut album, *Three Dollar Bill Y'All$*, in 1997, things were speeding so fast that it was

THE FACTS

2001
's best-selling album worldwide was the Linkin Park debut Hybrid Theory. Bye bye, nu metal...

7 MILLION
is the number of copies sold of Significant Other. No surprise with singles like Nookie and Break Stuff

31
was Dez Fafara's age when Coal Chamber released their debut, eponymous album in 1997

$6.4 MILLION
is the amount grossed by the first Family Values Tour in '98

$500,000
was the size of the advance Slipknot received for signing to Roadrunner

98
is the combined Scrabble score for the names of all four members of System Of A Down

all Fred could do to hold on to his red baseball cap.

"It just happened," he says. "We didn't have time to pay attention. I was literally bullshitting anything to keep the band going. We were laughing every day at the fact that it even existed in the first place."

Fred might have quickly presented himself as nu metal's jock-in-chief, but he insists that underneath the potty-mouthed braggart in the baseball cap was a shy, insecure man still bearing the scars of childhood bullying. His band's success was a massive "fuck you" to all those people who had made his life hell.

"They'd ruined my life, and I thought they'd ruined our fans' lives as well," he says. "I really thought that people were identifying where I was coming from – a guy who finally got to stand up and fight back. The irony was that the bullies themselves started to like the music."

This outsidership – personal and musical – bred a camaraderie between the bands. "Every time Coal Chamber played, I'd call System to open for us," says Dez. "In the early days, Limp Bizkit would stop by and say hi. When Coal Chamber did our first record, Fieldy loaned [original Coal Chamber bassist] Rayna his gear."

"I GOT TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE BULLIES. IRONICALLY, THEY STARTED TO LIKE THE MUSIC"

MORGAN LANDER

Nowhere was that gang mentality stonger than on the Ozzfest. Founded in 1996 as a two-day festival held in different cities, by the following year it had become a hugely successful travelling circus, and a lightning rod for freaks and weirdos onstage and off.

"Ozzfest was incredible," says Dez. "It was the first time the US had ever seen anything like it. Those kids who went to school dressed like the bands they were into and got shit for it, they were the ones coming to see us," says Dez. "They wanted to feel like they had something of their own. To feel like they belonged to something more powerful than themselves."

OZZFEST'S SUCCESS SPAWNED a rash of copycat events, most notably Korn's Family Values extravaganza, which kicked off in 1998. Limp Bizkit ▶

The 18-legged, dead crow-huffing monster that is Slipknot.

played both events, and played a key role in the burgeoning hedonism that marked the start of nu metal's imperial phase.

"I'm a guy who couldn't shake a stick at pretty girls and get them to date me," says Fred. "I went from that to roomfuls of people who'd do anything for me. I definitely enjoyed myself as much as I could. One time there were, like, 15 girls bent over and there was this other girl putting strawberries in their butts. We were all like, 'What the fuck's going on? This shit doesn't happen outside of Mötley Crüe videos!'"

In the wake of Ozzfest and Family Values, the floodgates broke. Nu metal became a truly mainstream proposition. Korn's *Follow The Leader* and Limp Bizkit's *Significant Other* were huge global hits, paving the way for a new wave of bands to ride their coat-tails. There was Static-X, whose singer sported a hairstyle that resembled a bizarre electrical accident; Orgy, a bunch of eyeliner-sporting hair metal refugees who came on like Duran Duran in leather onesies, plus Snot, Human Waste Project, Videodrone, Adema and countless other long-forgotten outfits, all with their own 'crazy' shtick, all cranking the dial up to 'weirdo'.

Most unhinged of all were a nine-piece from the backwaters of the Midwest who wore boilersuits and horror masks, and huffed the corpses of dead birds before they went onstage. Slipknot were a truly incredible experience on every level, and they would eventually keep the freak flag flying almost single-handedly throughout the 00s and much of the 2010s. But even as they were making a name for themselves, the more astute onlookers were starting to notice the writing on the wall.

"It was starting to play itself out," says Dez. "There was a certain band – I won't say which one – who put out a record, and when I heard it, I went, 'This is it – the scene is dead.'"

In 2000, Linkin Park released their debut album, *Hybrid Theory*. It was an instant success, selling five million copies in 12 months (sales eventually exceeded 10 million). The band sounded nu metal but looked like a boy band. They didn't swear, didn't drink and they certainly didn't shove strawberries up anybody's arse. They drove a stake through the heart of the scene that spawned them.

It raised expectations to unrealistic

"THERE WERE 15 GIRLS BENT OVER WITH STRAWBERRIES UP THEIR BUTTS"

FRED DURST LOOKS BACK ON HIS WILD WAYS

Coal Chamber: there at the birth of the nu metal scene

GETTY X4

Sepultura: a huge influence on the nu metal scenxs

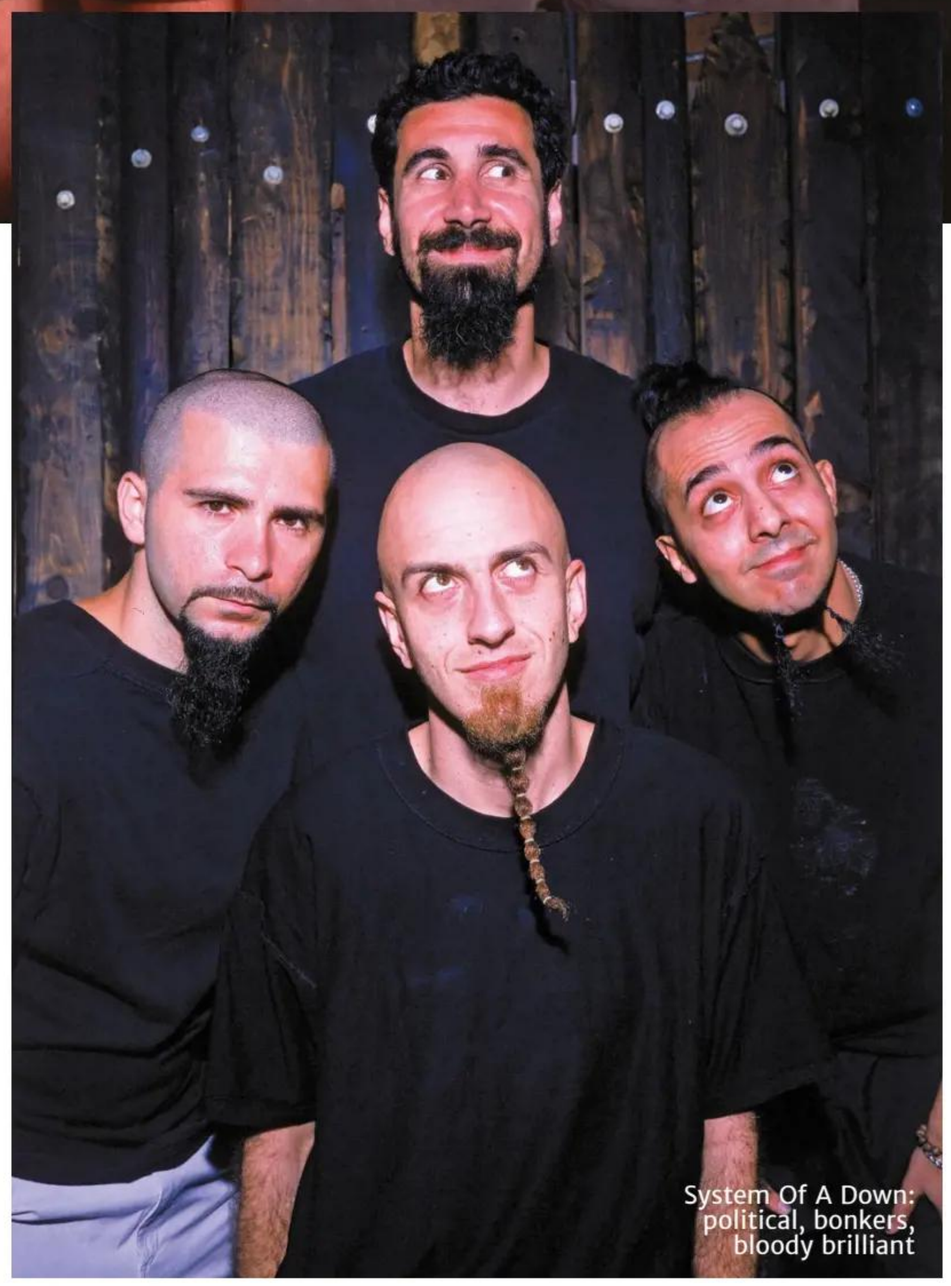
levels. A band like Coal Chamber, who looked and sounded like an explosion in a nail factory, stood no chance in this new, hyper-commercial climate.

It didn't help that the personal and chemical excesses of the past few years were starting to take their toll. Members of Korn and Deftones struggled with drug addiction, as did three-quarters of Coal Chamber, who split up following their third album. "The drugs and the money bullshit was tearing us apart," says Dez.

Limp Bizkit were having their own problems. Their third album, the none-too-subtly titled *Chocolate Starfish And The Hotdog Flavored Water*, had been a huge mainstream hit in 2000. But for everyone who loved them, there were 10 who loathed them – and especially loathed Fred. One of them happened to be their own guitarist, Wes Borland, who quit in 2001, partly out of embarrassment at what the band had become.

"There was a monster living out there, and he had a red cap on," admits Fred now. "I was thinking, 'That guy? Who the fuck is he.' It was like Tyler Durden from *Fight Club*."

It was Bizkit's disastrous 2003 album, *Results May Vary*, that banged the final nail into the coffin of nu



System Of A Down: political, bonkers, bloody brilliant

metal, single-handedly knocking the bottom out of what was left of the scene. "We went underground," says Fred simply, though you could argue that the decision had been taken out of their hands.

Over the next few years, nu metal became a dirty word. Some bands ploughed on (Korn, Limp Bizkit), some wisely ducked out (System Of A Down), some reinvented themselves as straightahead rock'n'roll bands (latecomers-to-the-party Papa Roach). Some, such as Slipknot, even remained on an upward trajectory, though they were firmly in the minority.

But then a strange thing happened. The passage of time and a lack of a decent scene for misfits to latch onto conspired to create a nostalgia for nu metal. The 2013 Download festival in the UK featured Korn, Slipknot, Limp Bizkit and Coal Chamber on the bill. A decade later, the Sick New World festival in Las Vegas read like a Who's Who of the late 90s/early 00s scene. Nu metal has become classic rock. The rehabilitation of the league of freaks is already underway.

"I look back on it and I see how significant it is," says Dez, who first reformed Coal Chamber for the first time in 2011 and then again in 2023. "The biggest bands on the planet right now are from that scene – Slipknot, Korn, System Of A Down. The reason is that it was so different. The music, the look, the people. There was something in that scene that was real to the core. We were proud to be part of it."

The lunatics are back and the asylum is theirs for the taking once more.

As Korn dusted off their Adidas trackies for their 20th anniversary shows in 1994, Jonathan Davis and Munky revisited their self-titled debut. Are you readyyyyy?

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN

REMEMBER WHO THEY ARE

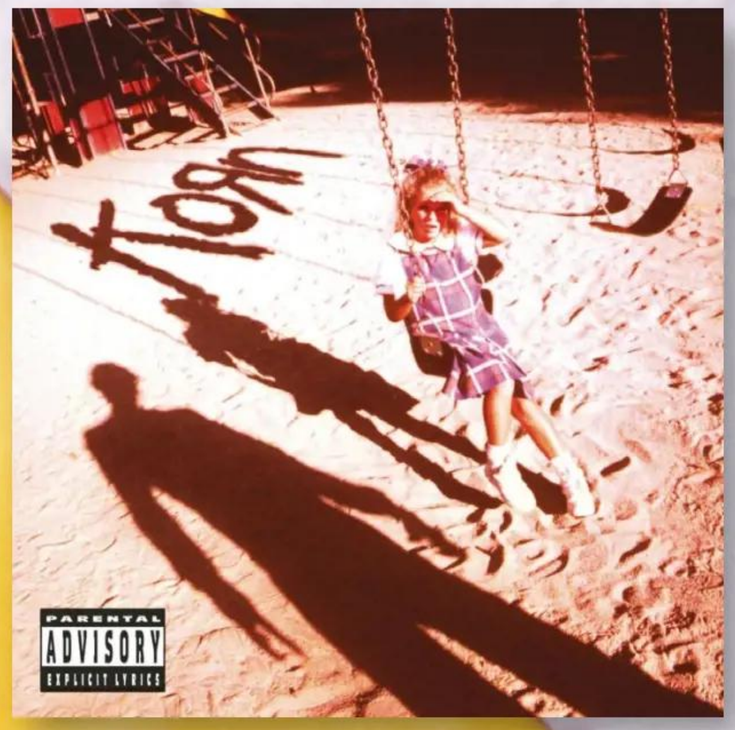
THERE'S A CERTAIN IRONY in the fact that rock critics were busy writing obituaries for Kurt Cobain as Korn arrived at Indigo Ranch studios to record their debut album in April 1994. The music the Bakersfield, quintet recorded would kill off grunge just as emphatically as Nirvana's arrival in the mainstream signalled the death knell for hair metal.

Introduced by Jonathan Davis's electrifying call to arms, "Are you ready?",'Korn's self-titled debut album is the sound of a musical revolution – a brutal, thrillingly invigorating re-imagining of metal for a new millennium, which has lost nothing of itspower and impact two decades on.Forensically dissected, the source materials for its hybrid sound are easily discerned, with Korn owing a debt of thanks to Pantera, Rage Against The Machine, Faith No More and the woozy atmospherics of West Coast hip-hop. But in collaboration with maverick producer Ross Robinson, Korn created a distinctive, innovative and unique new vocabulary for metal which would singularly redefine the musical landscape.

On its release in October 1994, *Metal Hammer* commented that "throughout the 12 tracks, there is a constant deep, dark groove with a hypnotic sense of melody". The album's significance would be amplified over the years thanks to the sheer number of bands who had used the unique sound forged by Korn as a jumping off point for their own musicial explorations – some more successfully than others. Korn themselves would return to the album in 2014, playing it full on a 20th anniversary tour – something that found Jonathan Davis in particular dredging up some long-forgotten memories.

"It was a bunch of kids from Bakersfield living out their rock'n'roll dreams',' recalls the singer today of his band's iconic debut album. "I remember it as a really cool experience."

"If we'd known just how important the album would become, maybe we'd have tried to stay sober for some of it!" adds guitarist Munky, as the pair prepare to look back on this metallic masterpiece.



BLIND

The birth of a legend, and one of the all-time classic album openers

Munky: "The riff came from Jonathan's old band, SexArt. Head and I saw them play at some little club and I remember thinking the riff was pretty cool – it was in a different key, but still really heavy. It felt like new territory; like something I'd never heard before. I think it might have been Ross Robinson who suggested doing a version of it, so we rearranged it, and I remember the demo version of it being super heavy. We were like, 'Wow, this has to be on the album.'"

Jonathan: "When my first band broke up, I asked my friend Ryan [Shuck], who went on to join Orgy, if I could keep the song. The way we did it was completely different to the original version anyway. What was I going for lyrically? I have no fucking idea, brother! This was just a stream-of-consciousness thing; it was all over the place. I think it's about being blind to your reality; blocking the shit out that you don't want to see or hear. Every single fucking time we start this up and see how the crowd reacts, it's incredible. Metalheads love this song."

BALL TONGUE

Scat vocals, hip-hop beats, seven-string guitars... the sound of the future. Jonathan recorded the vocals at his father's Fat Tracks studio while high on crystal meth

Jonathan: "When we moved to Huntington Beach, we rehearsed in Anaheim, at a place called Underground Chicken Sound. The owner then started managing us. We were all doing lots of speed at the time, but when he was tweaking he'd get cramp or something, and his tongue would ball up in his mouth. We'd be like, 'Uh-oh, he's getting ball tongue'

Munky: "His tongue would freeze up and he couldn't talk. He'd be going, [unintelligible gurgling noise] 'Guuurrgggghhh, gahhh!' Odd then, but funny now! This has got a great 'hit you over the head' riff: it was one of the first songs where Head [guitars] and I developed call-and-answer guitar parts and it worked out cool."

MICK HUTSON/REDFERNS/GETTY

"SOMETIMES PEOPLE NEED TO BE TOLD TO FUCK OFF"

MUNKY RAILS AGAINST THE HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING DETAILED ON FAGET

Jonathan: "When we got signed and went on to get real management, *Ball Tongue* took it hard, and I felt bad because he was like a brother to me, but we had to cut our links. This was a kind of salute to those early crazy days."

NEED TO

***'I hate you (Why are you taken?)'* sings an anguished JD on this biting tale of unrequited love**

Munky: "I remember Fieldy [bass] and David [Silveria, original drummer] working on this groove in the rehearsal room, and it was really cool and funky, and Head and I wanted to put some dissonant, diminished chords around it. There's always something really exciting about building songs from the ground up, and this one came together brilliantly."

Jonathan: "Do you remember the band Human Waste Project? Well, this song is about their singer, Aimee Echo. We were really good friends back in the day, and we never hooked up, and never did anything, but the vibe was there. I don't think I ever told her this, but I guess she's going to find out now..."

CLOWN

Jonathan Davis attacks smalltown intolerance and prejudice. The video for the song revisited his memories of being bullied in high school

Munky: "Head and I wrote the main riff for this in our neighbour's apartment when we were pretty high: we had been up all night doing crystal meth. I'm not sure that drugs opened our minds creatively, but they made us push our abilities to our limits, and pushed our boundaries in terms of making the sounds we heard it in our heads a reality."

Jonathan: "I remember the show that inspired the lyrics. We were playing this club in San Diego, and this fucking old skinhead punk kept screaming, 'You're not from HB [Huntington Beach], you're from Bakersfield!' I was like, 'I don't give a fuck where we're from, bro.' Eventually he took a swing at me, and *Ball Tongue* jumped up and knocked him the fuck out; laid him out right there. They dragged him out of the club, and halfway through the set I could see him out back, jamming to the music. That tells you what kind of fucking clown he was."

DIVINE

A filthy, rolling riff accompanies one of Jonathan Davis's creepiest lyrics; a revenge fantasy borne from obsession

Munky: "This was one of the first songs we wrote at Underground Chicken Sound. I remember [future Metallica bassist] Robert Trujillo coming to the studio because we were considering having him produce our first record, and he said, 'Let's work on one song to see how we work together,' so we picked this one. We didn't form a relationship with Robert to the point where he got to produce the album, but we liked the ideas that he had, and the song structure we created that day is the one that's on the album."

Jonathan: "The song is about sadism and stalking. It's a really dark song about basically torturing this poor girl psychologically. I've been known to do that... I was definitely letting some demons out on this album."

FAGET

The album's first truly jaw-dropping moment, as Jonathan Davis lets rip at the homophobic bullies who made his adolescence so miserable

Munky: "When people first heard this, they were like, 'Holy shit!' It's kinda like Rage Against The Machine on steroids. Sometimes people need to be told to fuck off."

Jonathan: "Growing up, I was a new romantic. My favourite band was Duran Duran, so I'd wear make-up and long shirts, and in Bakersfield – an oil and farming town – there were a lot of macho jocks who took offence to that. I got my ass kicked and got called a 'faggot' all the time. I wasn't gay, but it got to the point where I thought that maybe I was gay, and just didn't know it. It really fucked with my head, and I had to get that shit off my chest. Still to this day, it feels so good to be able to scream it out. Bullying is not some rite of passage that people should accept, it's bullshit, and I hope this song has helped people. Every time I sing this I relive that shit. It's my therapy, I guess."

SHOOTS AND LADDERS

Bagpipes, nursery rhymes, atonal riffs... no other band on the planet sounded like this in 1994

Munky: "Jonathan is an amazing bagpipes player, and the first time we heard him play we were like, 'Holy shit, we have to put this on the record!' We knew AC/DC did it, so we tried to figure out the tuning and mould the riff around it. This song, for me, fed into the idea of the album cover: it's this playful nursery rhyme, but you know there's something dark and mysterious behind it, and you can kinda sense the monster emerging in the middle of it..."

Jonathan: "I guess I was in a twisted state of mind when I wrote this, thinking about hidden evils and the corrupted innocence of childhood, and the dark meanings behind some of the nursery rhymes we all grow up with. I mean, Ring A Ring O' Roses is about the Black Plague, which is kinda fucked up. Now I get to see big, buff, macho men sing nursery rhymes at rock shows, which is kinda fucked up, too!"

PREDICTABLE

One of the album's heaviest tracks sonically, with an appropriately downbeat, dead-inside JD lyric

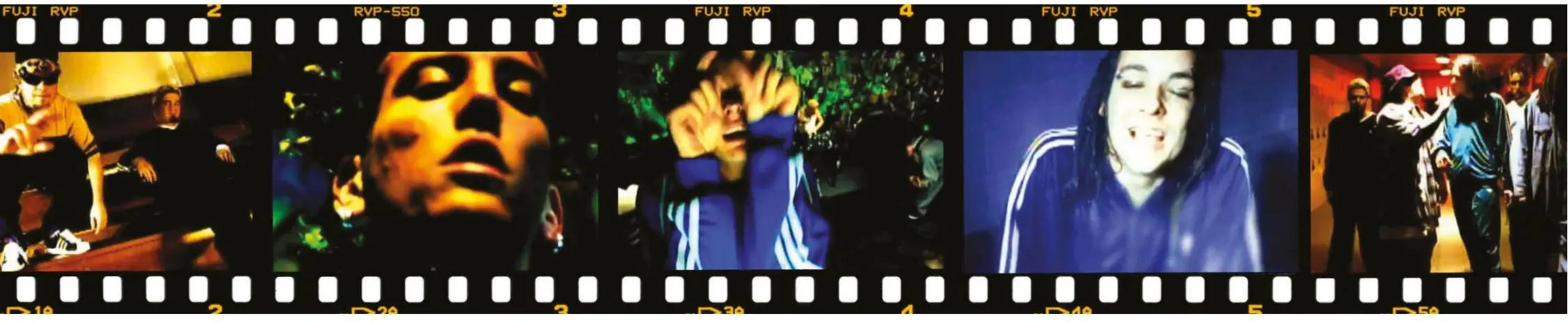
Munky: "This is one of the more metal songs on the album; the riff kinda reminds me of Pantera meets Alice In Chains. I remember thinking it was cool that it started with this simple figure played on one string through a clean channel, and then the riff comes in and hits you over the head. It's a great song, but not one of my favourites on the album."

Jonathan: "This is just a song about beingbored with life, about being down in the dumps and thinking life sucks. This whole record issuper dark, and comes from a dark place. Making it was fun, but it stirred up some dark shit, and going back to songs like this for the 20th anniversary shows is a real reminder of those times."

FAKE

One of the album's less celebrated tracks, partially inspired by the bullying Jonathan used to suffer at the hands of Fieldy

Jonathan: "That's about fake people... in part about some of the shit I had from Fieldy back in the day. There are still plenty of fake people out there, particularly in this business, but now I don't really give a fuck – I stay well away



Korn today (left to right): JD, Fieldy, Munky, Head, Ray Luzier

“EVEN NOW, DADDY’S STILL RAW”

AN ABUSIVE BABYSITTER WAS THE CATALYST FOR JONATHAN’S PAIN

PRESSX2

from them, and they’re not in my life. But whenyou’re a kid, 23 years old, it’s harder to deal with, and harder to understand why people do what they do.”

Munky: “I remember we wrote this song in San Diego, on a boat. We had a gig in San Diego and my dad had a small houseboat in a slip near there, so he said we could stay on it, so, of course, we partied all night. But we came up with most of the riffs that night. It’s one of my favourite songs, because it has so many parts but they all make sense when played properly.”

LIES

More soul-baring self-flagellation from Jonathan, on one of the album’s more low-key moments

Munky: “I always loved how Fieldy and David would think left whenever they heard stuff that Head and I were writing, and when we were working on this they said, ‘Let’s do something that when you turn up your car stereo, the fucking licence plate is going to rattle.’ They wanted almost like a hip-hop beat, and I loved what they came up with. We didn’t always know what we were doing on this record, and I think that’s the beauty of it.”

Jonathan: “This is as much about me lying to myself about my problems as hearing lies from others. Looking back, I wasted so much time and energy not dealing with problems, but when you’re young you don’t always have the confidence to address shit in your life.”

HELMET IN THE BUSH

Twisted industrial darkness, inspired by drug-fuelled anxiety

Munky: “This was written towards the end ofthe studio session, on a little drum machine. It was mainly Jonathan, Head and Ross. Iremember being gone from the studio for one day, and when I came back they said, ‘Listen to this!’ and they had this fucking killer track. I was blown away, and I was just like, ‘Let me put my shit onit, too!’”

Jonathan: “This is about good old meth amphetamine – about doing so much speed that your dick is so small that it just looks like a helmet in the bush! I remember people fucking freaking out about us doing electronic shit on that song, but I think it’s stood the test of time. After we did this record I did crystal meth for about three more weeks and then I quit, and never did it again: I thought to myself, ‘I have a drug problem, and if I don’t stop it’s going to kill me.’”

DADDY

The album’s most harrowing, raw and disturbing song, closing the album with the sound of Jonathan Davis sobbing uncontrollably in Indigo Ranch’s vocal recording booth

Jonathan: “That song is fucked up. It’s about abuse, obviously. Not from my parents, but from a babysitter, and unfortunately the scars still remained. That song needed to be done.”

Munky: “We knew what this song was about, and we wanted to create a spooky, heavy foundation for Jonathan so that he couldopen those doors. When we were tracking the song, Jonathan really took the memory and relived it, and I remember Ross telling us tojust keep playing when he broke down, so we were totally improvising for the last couple of minutes. I remember worrying that the tape would run out, and it did, literally 30 seconds after the end of the song. It’s a scary song.”

Jonathan: “In the studio I was properly freaking out and bawling, and I had no ideaRoss Robinson was getting it all on tape until I came back a couple of days later and he said, ‘Listen to this...’ I couldn’t even listen to it. I listened to it to learn the words for this tour,and even now it’s still raw. It caused a lot ofpain in my life, but it’s worth it if it gave other people some strength and helped them to deal with the same sort of shit. I think the family we have, helping and caring about one another, is magical, and that’s why I still do what I do. The money and the big house is cool, but the real pay-off now is making people happy. I knowthat sounds cheesy and not very rock’n’roll, but I don’t give a fuck. I’m old now and I can say what I feel.”

"IF SOMEONE HAS NO OUTLET THEY'RE GONNA CRACK"

…so said Korn's Jonathan Davis back in 1996, when *Metal Hammer* caught up with him as his band were on the verge of becoming nu metal's first superstars. We revisit a classic interview

WORDS: DAN SILVER • PICTURES: MICK HUTSON

In November 1996, *Hammer* staffer Dan Silver travelled to Salem, Oregon to interview Korn. They had just released their second album, *Life Is Peachy*, a sarcastic title for an album about drug abuse, sex, betrayal and revenge. In Salem, with its nondescript streets, car dealerships, burger joints and malls, Dan discovered "the sort of town that Korn were made for… the ultimate manifestation of the American Dream gone wrong". It also appeared to chime with their collective mental state at the time.

"Korn were seemingly in a bleak place," remembers Dan of his time interviewing the band. "In hindsight, it was a classic example of a band of outsiders who thrived in the margins struggling to cope with suddenly being the centre of attention."

Korn were playing the Armory Auditorium, the state guard's basketball court, in an attempt to crack their home market before heading out with Metallica. On Dan's visit, the 50s-style, stick-on letters on the front of the venue had been battered by the West Coast wind, causing a 'P' to fall off, so the legend from the gig promoter read 'MONQUI RESENTS KORN'.

"The photographer, Mick Hutson, and I thought this would be the perfect backdrop for the magazine cover shoot, but when we finally coerced the quintet outside they could not have been less into the idea," says Dan.

"[Bassist] Fieldy was particularly pissed off. After feeling the slightest of breezes brush his face, he pointedly declared the wind was making them look like 'a fucking hair metal band' and marched straight back into the venue. The rest of the band sheepishly followed the leader without a single frame being shot."

That mood continued into the subsequent interview, when, despite having covered the band on a couple of occasions for *Hammer* previously, Dan was given the shortest of shrifts.

"I'd had a fantastic time on the road with Korn in Liverpool just a couple of months earlier," says Dan, "but this time the mood was different. The band seemed tired. More wary. Guarded. Early on in our chat, drummer David Silveria took a disproportionate level of offence at me describing Korn as a 'metal band', and the ensuing bickering pretty much killed the interview dead."

During that disastrous chat, singer Jonathan Davis had been subdued and largely silent, meekly sitting back as Fieldy and David offered up a stream of surly responses. After the night's show, however, he made amends. Exhibiting an understanding of the rules of the game that his bandmates lacked at the time, Jonathan invited Dan onto his band's bus for an intimate midnight confessional.

"Jonathan was at once the charming host with the angelic demeanour and the confused child consumed by demons," remembers Dan.

And so, with just guitarist James 'Munky' Shaffer and a bottle of cheap peach wine for company, the frontman opened up about his personal lyrics, his background as an embalmer, the song *Daddy*, and how fatherhood had changed his approach to partying.

The majority of your lyrics are heavily, almost uncomfortably, autobiographical. How does it feel to bare your soul to hundreds of strangers night after night?

"I wouldn't say fun, but very rewarding and very relieving. Every time I do it, it makes me feel better – the comeback ▶

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

from the crowd and seeing all that madness out there. I'm touching something, I think, that people wanna talk about, that people can relate to. It's hard night after night, but I need to do it, I have to."

Why do you feel the need to be so confessional?
"It's my therapy. I'm like a Coke bottle. If that shit builds up for so long, it's gonna explode, so with my music, it gives a chance for those feelings to go."

How does it feel knowing that some of the kids in the audience are only there to get loaded?
"Here, that's a given. There's kids who just come here to pick up on chicks. But I think if they come to our shows, they're gonna get a rude awakening and realise what the fuck I'm talking about and what we're really about."

Do you never think, 'Why am I putting myself through this for kids who couldn't give a fuck?'
'No, I guess it's for me, I guess I'm a selfish bitch. It's like art – at least artists have the fucking pleasure of painting a fucking picture and putting it on a wall for everybody to see time and time again. They don't have to repeat that, but musicians have to do that. That's the whole fucking beauty of it: it's gonna be a different show every time."

When you're singing, do you think about the events that inspired the lyrics?
"I think about that a little bit, but I'm just letting my brain do what it does. You can only think about that so long before it becomes stale. I do remember those times and that does piss me off, that fuels my ass, but it's something fucking crazy. It's like doing a drug. When we're up onstage, it's like going to that place where you're not even aware of it and once the show's over, it's gone, you don't even remember."

You should bottle it – you'd make a fortune.
"I wish I could! If I could record the essence of what I feel on stage, we'd all be millionaires!"

Does singing about those experiences every night negate the emotion, reducing the original events to the status of just another lyric?
"It doesn't become reduced to another lyric, but I think it does become like that and that's part of the therapy. I wanna get this shit out, so when you think back and look at it, it's like [sharp intake of breath] 'What the fuck was I thinking?' That's helping what I'm trying to fucking do. But I would never consider them just lyrics, 'cos those feelings are very meaningful to me and what we do is very meaningful."

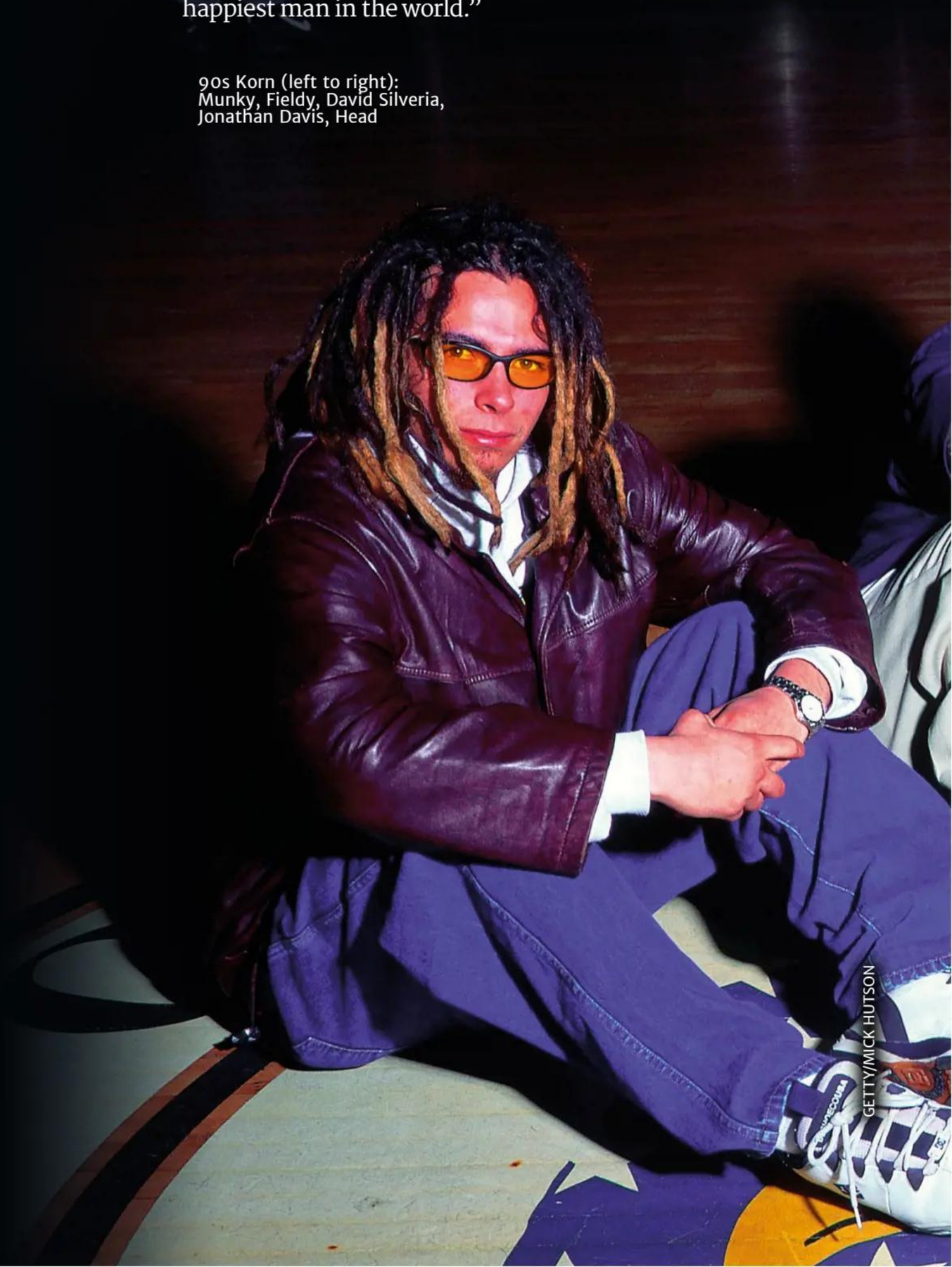
Is there anything that you now regret being so open about in your lyrics?
"The only thing I regret is that with the song *Daddy*, everybody thought that my dad fucked me. All I'm going to say is, he didn't fuck me."

How about the sentiments behind the song *Kunt*? Have you had a lot of flak for the attitude towards women expressed in that song?
"Yeah, in America. In Europe you call each other cunts – "You bloody cunt!" – all the time. [In America] they thought 'cos I named it *Kunt* that it was against women. But I just wrote that song. It is toward women, but women that have hurt me in my life, ex-girlfriends and stuff like that. Women go around talking about men all the time – 'Men are pigs!' Well, fuck that! I have no animosities towards women at all. I fucking love women! Women are great. They're great, great, great people. If I come home and talk to my girl about personal things, she makes me feel better about myself: 'Don't forget who you are…' and all that. And I go, 'Thank you.'"

Do you still find it hard to form relationships?
"Fuck, yeah. It's a trust thing. I mean, I love my girlfriend now, 'cos I trust her and she's been with me since I was nothing. She lived with me in a fucking closet in my house. She borrowed money from her parents to keep me and pay our rent. She believed in me. Now if I met some girl, it would be different; I would always have that thing in the back of my mind that she's with me because of who I am."

How has bringing up your son Nathan affected the way you look at things? Has it made you re-evaluate your own childhood?
"Fuck, yeah. Growing up, I had all these aggressions, because my father and my mother were doing all this shit, but now I have a kid and I'm in their shoes, I kinda fucking know why shit happens, I can kind of understand now. No one knows what it feels like to be a parent 'til you have one of your own."

Do you find that you have to stop yourself going down the same road as your father?
"I am going down the same road my dad did. It's killing me, 'cos I'm doing what my dad did to me in that I'm always on the road, but I tell myself that I'm making his life better in the future. He'll be pissed off with me, probably get in a band and write songs about me, and that would make me the happiest man in the world."



90s Korn (left to right): Munky, Fieldy, David Silveria, Jonathan Davis, Head

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

“I AM GOING DOWN THE SAME ROAD AS MY DAD”

Has it affected your lifestyle at all? Can you still party like you used to?
“I don’t party while he’s around. I don’t drink while he’s at home. If he’s at grandma’s house, I can go out and party and get fucked up and go home. Once I came home fucked-up drunk, high on speed, looked at him and it killed me – that look in his eyes. I felt like a piece of shit. I’ve never done it since, I cannot look at him. I think he saved my life – the way I was going I was gonna kill myself, dying from drinking.”

How emotionally or mentally stable are you right at this moment in time?
“A psychologist said I wasn’t ready for the asylum, but I do have problems. I’ve got a way to deal with them and I have an outlet. Everybody does something, be it killing people, be it writing poetry, be it doing art, whatever. Everybody needs an outlet. If someone has no outlet, they’re gonna crack.”

So it’s Korn or mass murder.
“I delved down and fucking cut up dead bodies. What would be the difference if they were alive?”

A long jail sentence?
“That’s the only fucking thing. And that goes down to what society says is wrong. Lions kill deers to be able to eat. We’re all fucking animals when it comes down to it. The only difference between us and animals is that we can communicate. We’re just advanced fucking monkeys.”

Are you running out of personal experience to draw on for future lyrics?
“I dunno, man. I’ve never ever thought about shit. On this album we just went into a hotel, I got shit-faced drunk. And when you get drunk, emotions come out, you know that, and I wrote five songs. I’ve done songs sober, too, and I’ve done songs fucked up on speed. You need stuff to bring things out of you, ’cos your body naturally hides stuff away because you don’t wanna deal with it. I’ve done songs about bandmembers, I’ve done songs about friends, I’ve done songs about childhood shit. I’ll just dive deeper into what’s up.”

Would you say that you have a depressive personality?
“Oh yeah. Ever since I was little, I’ve always had to bear that shit anyway. It’s always what I’ve been taught – nice people keep quiet, or whatever. I’m not gonna walk around [going] ‘Fuckyoufuckingfuck…’ that’s not right.”

Unless you’re onstage… What demons still drive you to write and perform as you do?
“To prove that I am who I am. The press has always come out and said I’m not this and I’m not that. I’m just basically struggling to prove what I am. That keeps me going. A lot of people don’t take me seriously.”

The English press has generally been sympathetic to your cause. Is the American press not so?
“I got one from *Entertainment Weekly* saying, ‘I’m glad Jonathan Davis can capitalise on his bad childhood, like everybody had in this fucking country, to make money out

“I DELVED DOWN AND CUT UP DEAD BODIES”

of it.’ That really made me fucking mad. Who’s this fucking bastard to say that? These are my feelings you’re talking about. And I’m not putting my feelings out to make money at all. I’m putting my feelings out for myself and other people. If I get money, that just comes with it. But I’m not one to be money-hungry. Fuck them. Fuck those scared little bastards.”

Whenever I think of Korn, I’m reminded of the Denis Leary joke about the American trend to whinge about coming from a dysfunctional family. Sometimes life doesn’t work out the way you want, so get fucking used to it.
“That’s human instinct, just to fucking look the other way. You make fun of anything you’re scared of: dying – oh, you’re gonna die now, HA HA HA HA HA! It’s a human emotion. And when I say really, really real things, people get scared and there’s a backlash, ’cos they don’t wanna deal with the reality that’s in front of them. The truth hurts.”

Playing Devil’s advocate, a lot of people choose not to go through their therapy in public and inflict it upon others.
“[Sarcastically] I guess I’m a big tanking motherfucker. I’m going out there tanking people, telling them my problems and hoping they’ll feel sorry for me. I don’t want their sorrow, I just want them to appreciate what I’m doing. Don’t feel sorry for me, that’s the last thing I want.”

Are you worried about being seen as just another whining American?
“Not at all. There’s 1,700,000 people that like us. Fuck that.”

THE EARLY DAYS

In 1996, we didn’t know Korn that well yet, so we got Jonathan and bassist Fieldy to fill us in

HOW DID YOU MEET?
Jonathan: “Our dads played in a band together.”
Fieldy: “Me and him almost had the same lifestyle. We did the same shit, our parents hung out – they did the same shit. They’d park a big old GMC truck with a bunch of beer in the foothills and watch us ride motorcycles. They practised in the garage while we were sneaking beer from their refrigerator and drinking it in our bedroom. They were why our mums did coke!”
Jonathan: “You got to do what I wanted to do, though – I couldn’t be cool. My father wouldn’t let me do anything, that’s why I became a nerd.”
Fieldy: “My dad was trying to throw a guitar in my hand when I was, like, six.”
Jonathan: “My dad tried to keep me away from one.”

WHAT WERE KORN LIKE IN THE EARLY DAYS?
Jonathan: “When Korn wasn’t even signed, I used to wear a full face of make-up and an army-green jumpsuit – I was a total goth kid doing my shit. When we were coming up, I was just looking around and seeing all these people do this and going, ‘I don’t wanna be another one of those motherfuckers! I don’t need to hide behind make-up; I just wanna be real.’ So I chose not to wear it anymore.”

JD, Fieldy and David: a band of a different stripe

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

Sepultura: the boys from Brazil ponder their influence on nu metal

SEPULTURA

The nu metal love in started here

IN ITS EARLY DAYS, nu metal bowed down at the altar of Faith No More and Rage Against The Machine. But there was another band who were equally influential on shaping the sound of the genre – Sepultura.

The Brazilians had begun life in the mid-80s as an underground death metal band, but 1993's *Chaos AD* album was filled with the kind of scuzzy, groove-heavy metal that would inspire Korn and their ilk.

Sepultura frontman Max Cavalera's antennae for new music were always twitching, and he was an early adopter of Korn's self-titled debut album. He enlisted its producer, Ross Robinson, to work on his own band's landmark 1995 album *Roots*. That record saw Sepultura incorporating nu metal's downtuned grooves into their own sound and enlisting Korn vocalist Jonathan Davis to duet alongside Faith No More's Mike Patton on the track *Lookaway*.

Max batted away suggestions that *Roots* was a nu metal album, describing it as "really more kind of caveman [thing]",but the links were established. The singer guested on *Headup* from Deftones' second album, *Around The Fur* – a song whose lyrics gave their name to Soulfly, the band Max formed in the wake of his split from Sepultura in 1996.

The love-in worked both ways. Soulfly's self-titled debut album featured appearances from Limp Bizkit duo Fred Durst and DJ Lethal (on the single *Bleed*) and Deftones' frontman Chino Moreno (on *First Commandment*), while 2000's *Primitive* saw Max collaborating with Corey Taylor of Slipknot on *Jumpdafuckup*. Max had helped breathe life into nu metal with Sepultura. Now the circuit was complete.

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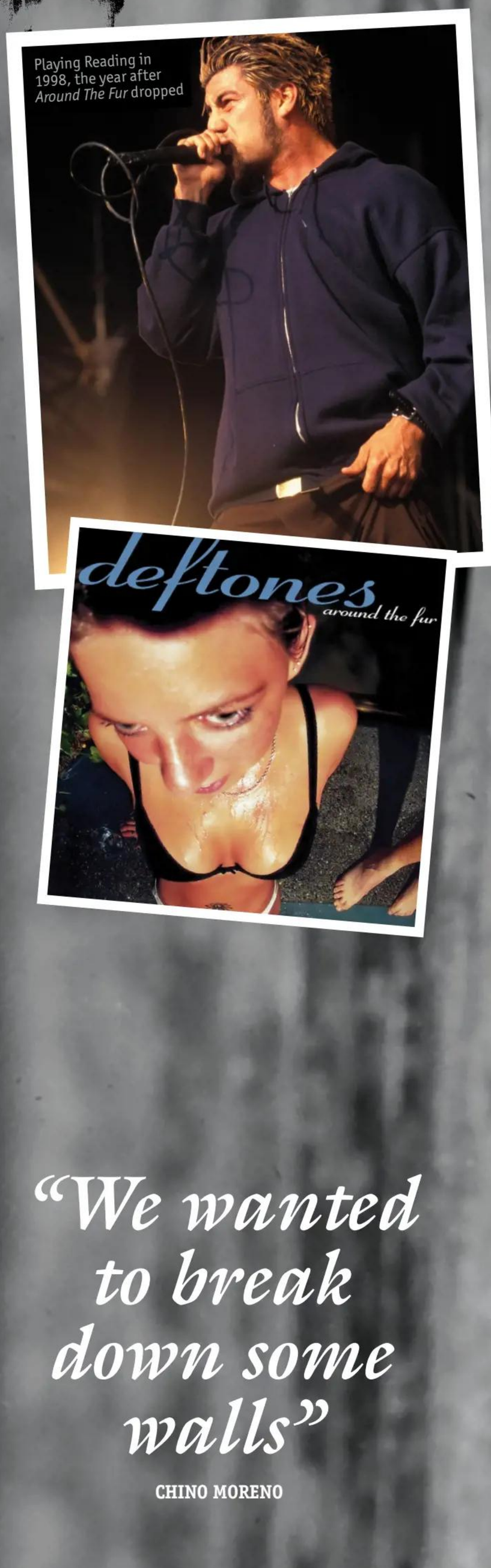


MICK HUTSON

My

"We wanted to break down some walls"

CHINO MORENO

Deftones (clockwise from right): Chino Moreno, Chi Cheng, Frank Delgado, Abe Cunningham, Stephen Carpenter

Own Stunner

Deftones second album, 1998's *Around The Fur*, was the one that locked in the template for their sound. It involved skating, Max Cavalera and a dodgy Maccy D's trip...

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

In early 1997, Deftones were a cool band to namedrop, thanks to the rough-and-ready howl of debut album *Adrenaline*, released on Madonna's Maverick label two years earlier. For many Generation-X 20-somethings, obsessed with drinking, smoking and skating, this would be enough. But the Sacramento quartet were determined to push things further.

"I think *Adrenaline* is a good introduction to our band," says vocalist Chino Moreno, "but I knew we had so much more that we could expand on. The mindset of going in to follow that record up was one of the greatest times for us. It felt like we had nothing to lose. We thought, 'Let's break down some walls, let's make some noise, and let's make some songs out of that noise' – and that's what we did."

The result of this youthful wonderment was the now-classic *Around The Fur*, which became Chino's own personal career highlight.

"It's my favourite record we've ever made because of that mindset," he continues. "We were just so ready. It's funny, because Chi [Cheng, the band's original and late bassist] had moved with his wife to San Diego, which is about a nine-hour drive from Sacramento, so when we were rehearsing, it was usually without a bass player. Abe [Cunningham, drums] and Stephen ['Stef' Carpenter, guitar] wrote most of it as a three-piece. We were so ready to work!"

It wasn't all hard graft for the band, though. At this point in their lives, they were determined to enjoy every moment.

"We were in this rehearsal room that had a skate ramp," laughs Chino. "And we were all big into the skate scene. So we'd hang out at our studio all the time, skate for a bit, then write some music. Back and forth, you know. Looking back at it now, it was kind of like the time of our lives. We had made this record and we knew we could better it; we had this chance to make a sophomore effort and prove to people that we were the best new thing, which I believed we were, and I think you hear that on the album."

When it was time to record, Deftones once again headed to Studio Litho in Seattle, WA, to work with Pantera, Soundgarden and White Zombie producer Terry Date. On *Adrenaline*, they'd pushed him to recreate the sounds of his previous work. For *Around The Fur*, he convinced them to let him take a different approach, and Deftones' distinctive low-down tone was born.

"When I was a kid, the first Metal Church ▶

Deftones backstage at the Melkweg in Amsterdam, 1997.

GETTY

album [released in 1984] really made an impression on me," Stef tells us. "It was incredibly punchy. I told Terry that I wanted *Adrenaline* to sound like that, so you could turn it up real loud. When it came to recording *Around The Fur,* he told us that we should be considering going for that low end, bringing a more bass-heavy sound. And when we got that, we were all really excited."

"It came to the point with *Around The Fur* that we just had to let Terry be Terry," adds Chino. "He captured what we wanted so perfectly. From the second the drums kick off in *My Own Summer,* he kills it. He was amazing."

Chino and Stef's own partnership was evolving, and in later years – particularly on *Around The Fur*'s follow-up, the masterful *White Pony* – they would sometimes clash over the creative direction of songs. But at this time, that tension had yet to surface.

"I don't think that push-and-pull played a part back then," Stef considers. "We were just ready to go. That relationship that people talk about, it's weird to me. We always just wanted to serve the music, and when you're that passionate about something, then of course there are going to be disagreements. But this whole drama about me and Chino? I've never got it!"

"It was just really exciting for us," says Chino. "Stephen wrote all the riffs and I put the vocals over it. It wasn't forced; we didn't argue. We were really connected at the time, and the record is a great snapshot of it. People have this idea that I write all the mellow stuff and Stef only likes big guitar riffs, but listen to *Mascara* on that record. That's a Stef song. We've always all been open to anything musically."

Around The Fur also established Chino as a frontman who wrote abstract, often unintelligible lyrics. When probed on the inspiration for those songs, he reveals he's still working his way towards a meaning even today.

"People have been trying to work them out forever!" he smiles. "But even I don't know. I guess when I look back and hear the words, I can recall what I was thinking about a little. But I never had an idea specifically. And it worked so well for me that I've used that method ever since. On the first record, there really were no lyrics – that's why they aren't in the liner notes. I was just making noises. *Around The Fur* is the first time I even sat down to write lyrics. I was just a young, introverted guy, not a confident lyric-writer."

But there is one track with a specific meaning – the brutal *Headup*. Arguably the heaviest in the band's back catalogue, it's built on a simple grinding riff and walls of feedback, and features Chino trading rabid yelps with Max Cavalera. It was the first time he'd appeared on a piece of music since his departure from Sepultura in late 1996, and was written in memory of his late stepson, Dana Wells, who was tragically killed in a car accident that year. Max turned up to the band's rehearsal room with a tape of the song's riff, and they recorded it live. Far from being a sad experience, Chino believes it was positive for all involved.

> ***"Max Cavalera is a very primal human"***
>
> CHINO MORENO ON THEIR HEADUP COLLABORATOR

"We lost the album in McDonald's!"

THANKFULLY THIS WAS BEFORE PEOPLE LEAKED MUSIC ONLINE

"It wasn't depressing at all, it was really uplifting," he says. "It felt so exciting for us. Those first Sepultura records were really important to us as a band – *Chaos A.D.* especially. So here is the singer from one of my favourite records, and he wants to collaborate with us. It was a sensitive issue. I met Max through Dana – we were one of his favourite bands, and he introduced us to Max – and then suddenly he dies. It was a crazy time. And Max chose to express his feelings on that with us on this song that he wrote for us. It was a very primal thing, and Max being a very primal human, it felt like the right thing for us to do."

Of course, it wasn't just Max who had noticed this new breed of metal band cropping up. While Deftones were concocting their new record, heavy music was mutating, with the likes of Korn, Limp Bizkit and Coal Chamber rising up. Due to their friendship with Korn and the emotionally open, downtuned riffs and hip hop-inspired sounds on *Adrenaline*, Deftones were routinely dropped in with what would soon become known as the first wave of nu metal.

"We didn't really pay much attention to that," snorts Stef. "I remember when these subgenre names didn't exist. It was just metal. So I don't think we made a decision to step away from it – we've never paid attention to what anyone else was doing. We just did what we thought was right, and tried to make a killer album."

Chino agrees to a point, but does make it perfectly clear that, as far as nu metal went, he wanted as far away from it as possible.

"We did make a very conscious choice of who we were going to play shows with," he says in total seriousness. "It was hard to be this young band and having to turn down tours. I can't remember how many times I turned down Korn! And they got pissed at us. Jonathan would say, 'Why do you hate us?' and I didn't know what to say. I'd tell him, 'Dude, I don't hate you. I love you guys, you're my friends. But I don't want to tour with you, I don't want to be on the Family Values with you and Limp Bizkit'. The name of the genre was nu metal, so anything that is new is one day going to be old. And I didn't want to be old with it."

Around The Fur was released on October 28, 1997, and was lauded by both fans and press alike. Peaking in the Billboard 200 at a respectable Number 29, the band were soon added to high-profile festival bills including Reading, Glastonbury and Ozzfest, where only Rob Zombie and Ozzy Osbourne played above them. With the singles *My Own Summer (Shove It)* – a UK Top 40 hit – and *Be Quiet And Drive (Far Away)* plastered all over MTV, Deftones had officially arrived.

"I knew we were on to something special," Chino nods. "We used to drive around and listen to mixes in our car, and we just couldn't believe how good it sounded. The success we've had since has all been from this as a building block. I'm very proud of the record and proud of what we accomplished with it."

Obviously Deftones would go on to even greater commercial success, but the longevity of *Around The Fur* is shown by the fact the album was certified platinum on June 7 2011… 14 years after it was released.

"It had a gradual impact on people," says Chino. "That's the most beautiful thing about it. Twenty years on and we're still talking about it. Lots of records sell millions immediately and are forgotten. *Around The Fur* kind of has this life of its own."

Stef, on the other hand, chooses to remember how *Around The Fur* was almost erased from history…

"I'm proud of the record, obviously," he smiles. "But, it's funny, we could have lost the whole damn thing! We went to New York to mix the record, and we had the finished master CD in the car, driving round listening to it. We stopped and went into McDonald's in Times Square, and Chi left the CD in there! We went back and couldn't find it… imagine that today! It would be all over the internet and we'd have been in some serious trouble. But we were a bunch of nobodies back then. Some guy probably found it, went 'Who?' and threw it in the trash!"

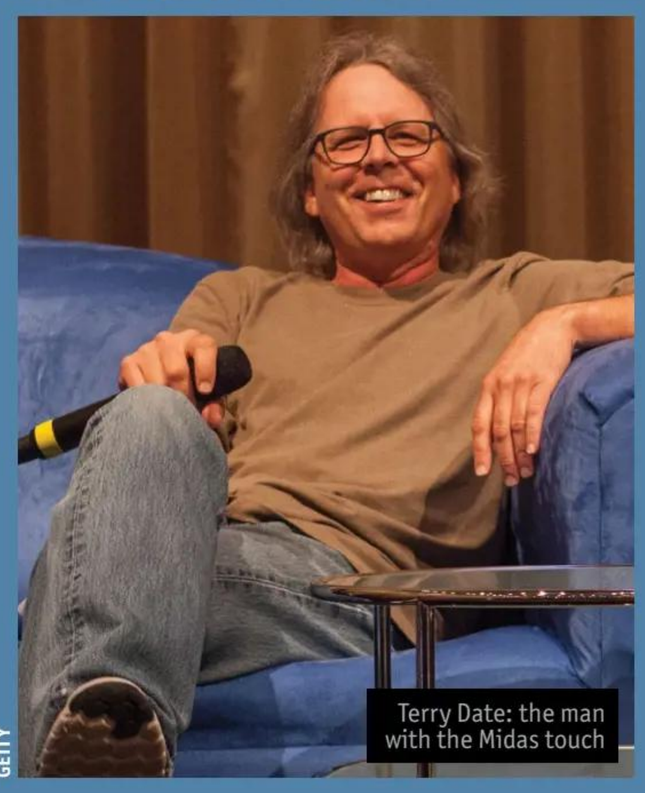
Stef lets out a big belly laugh. Twenty years on, the person that threw away one of the 90s' classic albums must be kicking themselves.

Chino taking five onstage at The Limelight in Belfast, 1998

LIVE SHOTS: MICK HUTSON

"They didn't have as many fears"

Legendary producer Terry Date, who worked on Deftones' first four records, remembers the vibe in the studio for *Around The Fur*



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Terry Date: the man with the Midas touch

WHERE WERE YOU IN YOUR CAREER WHEN YOU HOOKED UP WITH DEFTONES?

Terry: "I had just come off of working with Pantera and a lot of the metal bands of the time, and those records tended to have a lot of top end. Not a lot of hip hop low end. Deftones' influences were both of those kind of things; they were trying to get me to think about music in that way."

HOW DID THE PROCESS ON *AROUND THE FUR* DIFFER FROM *ADRENALINE*?

"I probably didn't get it on the first record. So when it came to *Around The Fur*, as far as sonically, my goal was to make sure the band's creativity came through. I think they trusted me more this time around. I love doing second and third records with bands, because the first record they've been playing those songs a long time, but the second record they have a lot more validation. They have already had some music put out and they've been playing to crowds that enjoy it, so they don't have as many fears. They still had the hunger, but on *Around The Fur* they had a little bit more consciousness of where they wanted to grow and how they wanted to become a bit more sophisticated."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT NOW?

"*Around The Fur* and *White Pony* are two of my favourite records I've ever worked on. There are some of their best songs on *Around The Fur*, I personally think. I love the guys, they're very consistent in themselves. Every time they turned up in the studio, the chemistry was always very similar. I've done four albums with them… five, actually, if you count the one that wasn't released [2008's *Eros*] and I would love to work with them again. They're great guys and a great band."

GOTTA HAVE FAITH

Back in 1997, Limp Bizkit were just wannabes with big dreams. Then they released *Three Dollar Bill, Y'All* and *that* George Michael cover, breaking down the door to mainstream stardom

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

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It was October 23, 1997 in Burlington, Vermont, and Limp Bizkit were halfway through a show that was going down like a lead balloon.

Four months earlier, their debut album, *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*, which threw together blistering rap and juggernaut riffs, had marked them as one of metal's promising new noises. They had spent the last year on the road, playing their first UK shows – with Korn, including a stop at London's iconic Brixton Academy in June – and Warped Tour in July and August. But that buzz hadn't reached Burlington's Memorial Auditorium yet – the reception that greeted Bizkit, who were supporting Primus alongside Powerman 5000, was one of stony apathy.

What a difference a week can make. "I've never seen anything change so quickly and so dramatically," recalls Powerman 5000 vocalist Spider One who, watching from the side of the stage each night, quite literally saw Bizkit's momentum catch up with them. "People started showing up early, they knew the songs and they were singing along. I remember distinctly when they'd play *Counterfeit*, people at the front on the barricade knowing every word. By the end of the tour, they should have been headlining above Primus."

It's hard to imagine now, but before the backlash, before the album launches at the Playboy Mansion, and before the band became overexposed, obnoxious caricatures of themselves vilified by the music press, there was a time when Limp Bizkit represented an exciting new frontier in heavy music. *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* didn't spawn globally dominating singles such as *Nookie* or *Rollin'* – in truth, it was a patchy record still feeling its way through a formula its creators would arguably nail on their follow-up, 1999's *Significant Other*. But on its release on July 1, 1997, the album introduced an unfiltered, gritty, albeit green, fresh take on the rap-rock fusion of bands such as Rage Against The Machine and Faith No More.

"WE MADE SURE IT WAS A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE"

FRED DURST

"If you listen to it now, it's probably got three or four really good songs on it," says journalist Dan Silver, who interviewed the band in 1997 for their first *Metal Hammer* feature. "The rest of it feels like a stepping stone to where they would go. Its importance is the doors that it opened, rather than the music that was on it."

It would be a few years until nu metal coalesced into the commercial force that would dominate popular culture through the late 90s and early 00s. But while the dots still needed connecting, they were already present and correct. That year, Coal Chamber released their self-titled debut, Incubus put out *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* and Deftones dropped *Around The Fur*. Meanwhile, System Of A Down had just signed to Rick Rubin's American Recordings label and Korn had established themselves as metal's grand hopes.

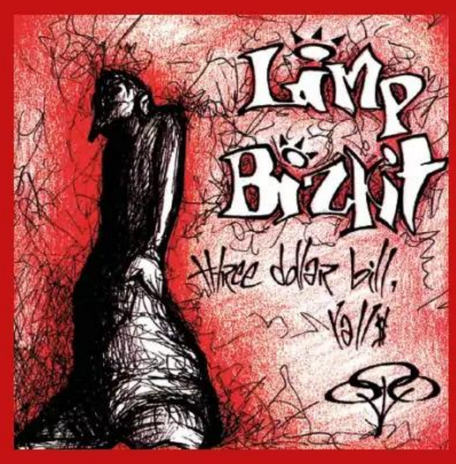
"It did feel quite exciting," remembers Dan. "All these bands with similar influences, and that knew each other, were forming a bit of a movement. It felt like something that was our own, for the younger generation coming through."

Despite being lumped together, the bands that would form the bedrock of nu metal were disparate in both sound and aesthetic. On *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*'s release, Limp Bizkit were incessantly dismissed as Korn wannabes, but in truth, their sound was much grittier than the rest of their peers', drawing heavily from hip hop, metal and hardcore – although it shared that same boundary-blurring mentality.

Critics? You're going down...

HIGH NOTES

Where to start with *Three Dollar Bill, Y'All*



THE HIT: FAITH
In Bizkit's hands, George Michael's 1987 pop hit was transformed into a barking, frenzied, spit-flecked pit-starter. "We took a song, ate it, swallowed it and shat out a phat Limp Bizkit version of it," Fred told *Hammer* in 1999. "We didn't just do the cover." Well, quite.

THE CLASSIC: COUNTERFEIT
Apparently about bands who tried to copy them, the lead-off single had a satisfyingly chunky low-end and an explosive ending. Oh, and a weird video of a boy turning into a fly. It might not have been an instant hit, but it soon became a favourite, and is still on their setlist today.

THE WILD CARD: NOBODY LOVES ME
'*Shut up!*' Between the vicious, bounce-along intro, the moody atmospherics and scratching, Wes Borland's weird fretwork and grinding chorus riff, and Fred's flip between whining vocals and a Tool-influenced bridge, *Nobody Loves Me* was a Frankenstein's monster of styles that somehow still made sense.

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Limp Bizkit: *not* a bunch of knuckleheads, despite appearances

"Me and Jonathan [Davis, Korn frontman] are the same age, we grew up listening to the same shit, everything's the same and it kinda rubbed off on our music a bit," Fred told us in '97. "The intense build-up vibe is there, 'cos we're part of this skool, but we're not playing the same fucking notes, the same patterns, sustaining the same tunes… when they hear me rap, how could they say that?"

"They were an organic blend," says Dan Silver today. "Fred has that hip hop background and DJ Lethal [ex-House Of Pain] clearly has that hip hop background, but Wes [Borland] is a classical metal guitarist, while [drummer] John Otto can flip between the two quite easily."

It was no coincidence that the birth of nu metal coincided with the launch of the first MP3 player, spawning a shuffle mentality between bands, who had begun pulling influence from all corners of the sonic spectrum, and fans alike. For Fred, who'd grown up on a mixture of 80s hip hop, glam metal and hardcore, it was all part of his starting vision.

"A lot of bands have tried to mix up stuff," Fred Durst told MTV in 1997. "But no one's done it like us yet. We made sure it was a rollercoaster ride on that record."

"IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FUNCTION AROUND FRED"

ROSS ROBINSON

When Limp Bizkit formed in 1994, they quickly built a solid following in their hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, playing rowdy shows at a local haunt called Milk Bar. Back then, Fred was a hustler, rallying A&R executives and jamming flyers and demo tapes into the hands of anyone he could get to pay attention.

"He was always business savvy," remembers Warped Tour founder Kevin Lyman, who runs the podcast My Warped Life, and had booked the band to play on the 1997 jaunt. "That knucklehead thing gets perpetuated, and they fed that in some ways. But in the background, there was a lot of business going on in their minds."

During Warped Tour, Kevin remembers that Fred would sign up every day to meet with the press. "He wasn't afraid to work. It might be some kid from the Poughkeepsie school newspaper, and he would give them an interview like he was talking to *Rolling Stone*."

It all paid off in 1996, when Fred handed Korn's bassist, Fieldy, a copy of Bizkit's demo at a Jacksonville gig. It was Fieldy who would hook the band up with Ross Robinson, who produced *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* at Indigo Ranch recording studio in Malibu, in early 1997. The long sessions, which aimed to capture the energy of the live show, were mired in Fred's romantic melodrama.

"He had a lot of heaviness in his mind dealing with girlfriends, and he was serious," Ross recalls. "So, he was kind of difficult to function around 'cos he was so heavy, and then extremely the greatest dude ever… it was kind of a bi-polar thing happening."

There are many things to celebrate about *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*'s futuristic vision, but Fred's lyrical prowess is not one of them. The rapper's relationship drama would provide the lyrical inspiration for *Sour* and *Stuck* ('*Stuck on yourself, you whore*'), and listening to those tracks now is an uncomfortable experience that blunts the album's innovative approach.

"At the time, not many people in the scene would have really batted an eyelid at those lyrics, but obviously 25 years later they don't look great," says Dan Silver. "Lots of people beat Limp Bizkit with lots of sticks, but their misogyny wasn't really anything that came up at the time."

It's true that Bizkit's unsavoury lyrics did little to stem their rise. By October 1998, slots on high-profile tours such as Ozzfest and Korn's Family Values tour had only raised their profile. But it was their cover of George Michael's *Faith* that would break them on a truly global scale.

"I came in [to the studio] one day and the band were like, 'What the hell are you talking about? We're going to do *Faith*?'" Fred told MTV in 2000. "I was like, 'Trust me, man. We'll do the beginning kind of cheesy like he did, then we'll just… blow it up.'"

The video for the single was put on almost constant rotation by MTV. At a time when their endorsement could change your career overnight, Bizkit found themselves catapulted into the mainstream consciousness alongside megawatt stars such as Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera.

"I don't think anybody expects to become that famous," says Spider One. "You start your silly little band and you're lucky to get out of the garage. Fred was just a normal dude and I think that's ultimately what connected the fastest for them."

Although Korn are recognised as spearheading nu metal, *Faith* would turn out to be the genre's first true global moment. As the band's profile grew, egos ran wild and unchecked, only emphasising the personality gulf between Fred's cartoonish persona and the introspective, freakishly theatrical Wes Borland.

"It was always such a strange pairing," says Spider One. "I don't want to speak for [Wes], but I think that's why he planted that flag, like, 'I'm going to be the weird guy in this band.' I think it was probably very important to him to draw a line, at least in an aesthetic way."

Limp Bizkit's subsequent albums, 1999's *Significant Other*, and 2000's unstoppable *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water*, which would sell an incredible one million copies in its first week, and would eclipse *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* in terms of commercial power. But the band's debut would still go double platinum in July 2001, and can be credited as a turning point that steered metal towards mainstream consciousness.

"They were actually groundbreaking," says Kevin Lyman, who reckons the band's contribution to metal is often unfairly discounted. "Some of that knuckleheaded-ness overshadowed what they were doing."

"Would Linkin Park have been as big as they were if Limp Bizkit hadn't pushed this music towards the mainstream?" asks Dan Silver. In the end, he believes *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* was the stepping stone that connected metal to mass acceptance, probably for the last time. "The doors it opened and the barriers it broke down are its greatest legacy."

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THE STORY BEHIND

A CERTAIN SHADE OF GREEN BY INCUBUS

A Certain Shade Of Green introduced Incubus to a generation, but even though they toured with Korn and Limp Bizkit and had hip hop influences, singer Brandon Boyd isn't having it when people call them 'nu metal'

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

PINPOINTING EXACTLY WHEN nu metal went from being a couple of unique bands in the metal scene to a fully fledged musical movement is tough. Looking back, 1997 seems to have a pretty good claim for being considered year zero for nu metal as a legitimate scene: it was the year we got debut albums from Coal Chamber, Sevendust, (Hed)pe, Limp Bizkit, Snot and more. It saw the release of Deftones' classic *Around The Fur*, and Taproot, American Head Charge and Soil all formed.

It was certainly a boom period for metal, with almost every emerging artist leaning into this new sound. But one band that year who ended up being lumped in with this new movement seemed to bring much more to the party than their peers – so much so, that their place in nu metal always felt a little forced. In 1997, alt funk metallers Incubus began setting themselves apart from the pack with the release of their breakthrough album *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.*, and with it a song that would be their first to connect on a greater level: *A Certain Shade Of Green*.

Formed in 1991, the Calabasas, California quartet had self-released their debut album, *Fungus Amongus*, in 1995 and decided to take their unique fusion of funk, metal and hip hop to as many people as they could.

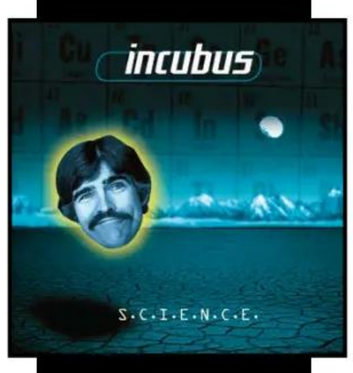
THE FACTS

RELEASED:
1997

ALBUM:
S.C.I.E.N.C.E.

PERSONNEL:
Brandon Boyd (vocals), Mike Einziger (guitars), Alex Katunich (bass), José Pasillas (drums), DJ Lyfe (turntables/keyboards)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
N/A



"We'd play anywhere, wherever would have us," frontman Brandon Boyd tells us today, when we ask for recollections of his band's early years. "We played bars, backyards, living rooms, opened up for other bands… We opened for a *lot* of other bands!"

This enthusiasm to play wherever they could, and the ever-increasing interest in metal's new sonic palette, brought Incubus to the attention of Paul Pontius, who had signed Korn to Sony subsidiary Immortal/Epic Records. He added the band to the label's roster. Epic's first decision was not to get the band into the studio, but to keep them on the road to hone their craft even further.

"We'd only done some intermittent touring," says Brandon. "It was the first time we had a budget and we had a little bit of cash, so we could update our gear, rent a van – it was a 15-person van with a trailer. We basically got in that van and stayed in it for about two years."

One of the first tours that Incubus did prior to the release of *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* was supporting Korn in Europe in early 1997. With the headliners riding high on the success of their second album, *Life Is Peachy*, it was a huge opportunity for Incubus to make an impression.

"We did a two-month run with them," Brandon remembers. "It never felt like anyone was trying to hold us back – it felt like we had support. They would see us going to our van, sometimes limping to the show as the van coughed its way to the parking lot. We weren't necessarily supposed to partake in the catering, but they would see us show up malnourished and under-slept and be like, 'Have you eaten?' We'd say, 'Nuh-huh.' And they'd order: 'Go get some food!'

"We weren't supposed to even get a dressing room… They'd give us a dressing room. Stuff like that sticks with me a lot. So much of the music from that era was so heavy and macho and sometimes even negative, and you get it in your head that these guys would be mean and unsupportive. But it was exactly the opposite."

While on the tour, Incubus began to try out the new material from their

Incubus (left to right): Mike Einziger, Chris Kilmore, Brandon Boyd, Alex Katunich, José Pasillas

GETTY

forthcoming major label debut, and it was here that they began to notice one song stand out.

"All we had were the songs from *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* and we had a 30-minute set, so we were only playing those songs," says Brandon with a smile. "But the first time a large audience were dancing in unison to a song they didn't know, it was *A Certain Shade Of Green* in Paris. It was the same reaction every night."

Buoyed by the reaction they'd received from the Korn audiences, Incubus headed into the studio to capture these new songs. Nu metal was now the hottest style in alternative music, and even though he concedes there are similarities between his band and the movement, Brandon is quick to distance himself from the genre.

"We weren't trying to fit into a particular niche at a particular time," he sighs. "We were just kids being influenced by a small handful of bands that we grew up with. Just to name a few we were collectively obsessed with: Primus, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Mr. Bungle, Pearl Jam, Alice In Chains, Firehose… some other obscure bands we were discovering because of going to shows."

Despite this, Incubus weren't making any deliberate attempt to consciously

"WE HAD A LOT OF PISS AND VINEGAR AND VENOM, AS YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE 19 OR 20 YEARS OLD"

BRANDON BOYD

move away from nu metal. "It's much more sincere in the way we write an album," says Brandon. "I always want to speak as authentically as possible as a writer and a singer."

Instead, *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* was a reflection of the genuine excitement the band felt about getting creative in a proper studio for the first time in their career.

"It was really exciting for us to be making a real album for the first time, with a budget," Brandon says excitedly. "We had more toys than ever before. Kid in a candy store? It was like our dad owned the candy store and we were just gorging ourselves on sugar for a couple of months! I remember being really excited to turn up and see what new sounds we could make. We were young, late teenagers: I was 19 when that record came out. We had a lot of piss and vinegar and venom, as you do when you're 19 or 20 years old – almost limitless energy."

"Limitless energy" isn't a bad way to describe the song that introduced Incubus to an entire generation of metal fans. *A Certain Shade…* rides along on a savage riff from guitarist Mike Einziger; some popping, propulsive hip hop grooves; all manner of manic scratches from the newly installed DJ Lyfe; and a brilliantly rapped, sung and screamed performance from ▶

Green team: what are they waiting for?

Brandon. Twenty-five years down the line, it still sounds like the standout moment from an album that has aged far better than many of those from their nu metal peers.

"I haven't been as involved with the choosing of the singles," says Brandon. "They're all my children, so picking one over the other would be me being a shitty parent. I like to offload those choices to people who have expertise in this area. I'm sure the label heard that track on an album that's mostly barking, with crazy weird rhythms and riffs, and it was the closest thing to a single they could find. It's not a single-heavy album."

The song didn't chart, but Incubus relentlessly toured over the next couple of years, with the likes of 311, Limp Bizkit, Far and more, getting progressively better as a live band. *A Certain Shade Of Green* was the standout track of their live show, the band often dropping it in early during support slots to really grab the attention and get, as Brandon describes it, "a big visceral reaction". The tactic worked, and the song and the album grew organically, eventually being certified Gold on both sides of the Atlantic. Brandon is rightly proud of the hard work his band put in during that era.

"Although there wasn't an obvious single on *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.* there was an energy that was captured, and it was best encapsulated by seeing us live," Brandon explains. "What we were able to take away from that was that we got those 10,000 hours in, so when we came to write [1999's follow-up and mainstream-smash album] *Make Yourself*, we were wise beyond our years."

Both nu metal and Incubus would get considerably larger in the years that followed, though the two would travel in different directions. But a quarter of a century later, their odd, brief union is still a period beloved by many fans.

"Twenty-five years is more than enough time for something to define itself," Brandon says, puffing out his cheeks when we ask him about the legacy of *A Certain Shade Of Green*. "But being one of the guys who crafted the thing, I feel like I'm a little too close to it to understand the legacy in a historical sense."

"BEING CALLED 'NU METAL' HURT MY FEELINGS"
BRANDON BOYD

As for the legacy of nu metal? Brandon is a little clearer on that.

"I thought it was terrible. I didn't like it. Honestly, I thought it was stupid," he smiles. "I know a lot of people love it, but being called 'nu metal' kinda hurt my feelings. If we made one record that fits into that genre, then so be it, but I never heard it in our music myself."

They may have been there for the birth, but *A Certain Shade Of Green* showed us all that Incubus were their own band, destined to walk their own, unique path.

GETTY

Nu metal's goth wing: Coal Chamber, with singer Dez Fafara (left)

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

COAL CHAMBER

Out come the nu metal freaks

COAL CHAMBER WERE nu metal's original freak-circus – an explosion of piercings, tattoos, wild hairstyles and fishnet shirts that owed as much to the goth underground as it did funk metal's musical exuberance or hip hop posturing.

The Sunset Strip scene was a wasteland when singer Dez Fafara and guitarist Meegs Rascón formed the band in 1993. But things gradually began to come into focus, and Coal Chamber were at the forefront of this new movement. Swapping low-hanging jeans and Dickies shirts for braided hair and face-piercings meant they stood out, while a growing local following helped them secure a deal with label-of-the-moment Roadrunner.

Their self-titled debut album, released in 1997, may have been late out of the gate, but immortal single *Loco* and tracks such as *Big Truck* and *Sway* (with its hip hop-referencing *'The roof is on fire!'* hook) put Coal Chamber on the map. Sharon Osbourne thought so – she took them under her wing, giving them a high-profile slot on 1997's Ozzfest tour.

That proved to be the band's high-water mark – 1999's *Chamber Music* failed to kick things to the next level, and they split acrimoniously following 2002's tepid *Dark Days*. Dez reinvented himself with DevilDriver, though Coal Chamber caught the early wave of nu metal nostalgia and reunited in the 2010s, releasing comeback album *Rivals* in 2016 (they split up once more soon after but reunited again in 2023).

"I look back on it all and I see how fucking significant it is," Dez Fafara told *Metal Hammer* in 2013. "And the reason is that it was so different. The music, the look, the people. And we were proud to be part of it."

OFF THE CHAIN

"IT WAS PARTY CENTRAL. WE WERE OUT OF CONTROL!"

BRIAN 'HEAD' WELCH

Korn in the 90s (left to right): James 'Munky' Shaffer, Brian 'Head' Welch, Reginald 'Fieldy' Arvizu, Jonathan Davis, David Silveria

Leash

It was the album that took Korn from metal's Great Pretenders to international megastars. But behind the scenes of *Follow The Leader*, things were going off the rails

WORDS: MÖRAT

GETTY

It seems crazy that a quarter of a century has passed since Korn's groundbreaking third album, *Follow The Leader*, was released and yet here we are – quite literally a lifetime to many younger fans who have grown up with the Bakersfield band. And perhaps those sounds that Jonathan Davis and co created all those years ago seem almost normal by today's standards, a template that's been endlessly copied, but rest assured they are not normal. Korn were – and still are – one of a kind: ever evolving, always leading where others follow.

It began in 1994, with their phenomenal self-titled debut album, a bolt out of the blue that was, to all intents and purposes, the birth of what became known as nu metal. An album so darkly brilliant that, even for Korn, it was difficult to supersede. By comparison, 1996's *Life Is Peachy* seemed formulaic and rushed, by the band's own admission a "fast food" album to capitalise on their success. "It had its moments, but half of us didn't really like *Life Is Peachy* compared to the first album," guitarist Head admits today.

But still, the eyes of the music world were upon Korn. Playing the Lollapalooza tour in 1997 with the likes of Tool, Snoop Dogg and Tricky, they were all over MTV, their audiences growing from clubs and theatres to 'sheds', playing to thousands of people. The big question was, what were they going to do next? Would they sink or swim? With Korn's trademark sound already being aped by other bands, would Korn just sound like a copy of themselves?

"It kinda felt like we'd coined this sound and then we were trying to follow it up with something we'd already done," agrees guitarist Munky. "So when *Follow The Leader* came around it was like, either we're gonna make the same record for the next 25 years or we're gonna be a band that evolves. I think that was the turning point."

As the title suggests, *Follow The Leader* was intended as a raised middle digit to the copyists, proof that Korn couldn't be left in their own wake.

"Now we think it's cool," says Munky. "But at the time we were like, 'Man, this is bullshit, people trying to sound like Korn.' We'd created something that was different, but right after the ...*Peachy* album we were starting to hear bands that sounded like us, so we took a left turn. They thought they knew the formula, and all of a sudden we put out this record that's hip hop, rock, metal... If you listen to the first album and *Follow The Leader*, it's almost like two different bands."

Having written future classics *Freak On A Leash, Got The Life* and a handful of other tunes, Korn made camp at NRG studios in Los Angeles in spring 1998. They were experimenting with the latest technology and working, for the first time, with producer Steve Thompson. Given that Ross Robinson had produced the first two albums and was known to be an integral part in creating their sound, it was a bold move to say the least.

"We just wanted to try something new," explains Head. "Ross was an awesome, ground-breaking producer who taught us a lot, but he was like a leader, and the best leaders should be able to train people and then send them out. And I feel like that's just what Ross did... and then we wanted to go and do our own thing. Ross had really trained us well with melodies and doing weird sounds with the guitar, so we took it another step. The band wrote all the music

All set to party at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1999

JD in 1998. "Digging deep and pulling up gold and diamonds..."

Munky and Head in LA, September 1998

GETTY X4

Fieldy and Jonathan in 1997

ALAMY

"THERE WAS DEBAUCHERY AND NIPPLE PIERCINGS!"

Along with Toby Wright, Grammy-winning producer Steve Thompson was charged with getting the best sound from Korn for their third album. It was no easy task...

HOW DID YOU GET THE JOB?
Steve: "I went to LA with my manager and we met in a rehearsal studio. I could tell that they'd interviewed tons of people and were ready to go back with Ross, so I said, 'Why don't we work on one song and see if the chemistry is there? I wanna get the essence of the band and turn it up to 11.' So I said to Jonathan, 'I wanna make sure that when people hear you sing they feel your pain and emotion.' He gave it so much that at the end of the performance, he literally passed out. They definitely stepped up to the table."

HOW WAS IT WORKING WITH THE GUEST STARS?
"I originally wanted B-Real from Cypress Hill to do the song *We Are Family* with Jonathan, but I had a big fight with Columbia because Cypress Hill were just putting out a new record and they didn't want it to conflict. I said, 'With all due respect, you're fucking wrong! This album's gonna be huge!' Meanwhile, Fred Durst was hanging out in the studio every day, so Jonathan decided to do the song with him. It just made me crazy, because I made a song that was more commercial, but as soon as Jonathan and Fred got together it was, 'My dick is bigger than your dick', and there goes the commerciality of that song. I did get to smoke a joint with Cheech, though!"

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO MISS SOME OF THE SESSIONS?
"We spent six months on the album, working very long hours, and I got run down and developed bronchitis. I had to go on medication and the doctor said I would have to stay in bed for a couple of days. The album was almost done at that point. We had the record label president and executives come in for a listening session before I got sick, and they were blown away."

WHAT WAS THE ATMOSPHERE LIKE IN THE STUDIO?
"It was absolutely insane! We did Korn TV every Thursday in the studio, and we had debauchery like you wouldn't believe. They were doing nipple piercings and we had tons of bands come in, from Orgy to Marilyn Manson to Primus. The studio was a circus, and normally I don't like to work that way, but the band were more comfortable with that approach so I let it go. It was very stressful, because I'm a perfectionist, and I wanted to make this record second to none. The idea with this album was, 'Let's experiment and go out of the box.' Personally, I think it holds the test of time."

together and a couple of producers worked on the record. It's been said in a blog that our songs were a mess when we sent them in, but they were not a mess – they were just like they are. There were a couple of tweaks, but the structures were all in place for almost the entire record."

"We went in the studio with Steve, and he was kinda going through some personal stuff so he kinda wasn't showing up and wasn't really engaged," Munky continues (see panel, left). "The engineer, Toby Wright, took over from that point and helped us engineer and produce the album. But Steve was there when we were doing three or four big songs on the album, and he was a big part of that. And we were fucking around a lot, too. It was chaos! So I can see why somebody would think, 'This is bullshit.'"

Jonathan and Munky kicking back

By all accounts, chaos is something of an understatement. Aside from putting out Korn TV on the internet every week – a show with guests including everyone from the Deftones to Marilyn Manson and porn star Ron Jeremy (another inspired move, given that household internet access was in its infancy) – the tales of partying, drugs, alcohol, and "random groupies", as Munky says, are legendary. Sessions would go from three in the afternoon until three at night, sometimes with nothing getting done.

"MY HEART WAS POUNDING AND I WAS SHAKING"

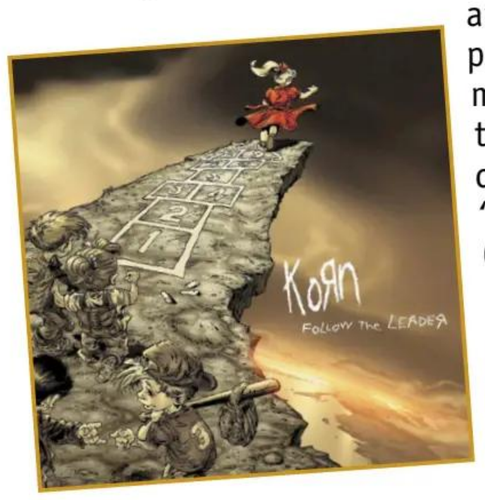
BRIAN 'HEAD' WELCH

Rumour even suggests that frontman Jonathan Davis wouldn't sing unless he had cocaine.

"Yeah, he'd want some Jack Daniel's and a line of blow," nods Munky. "He got sober immediately after that album, that's how fucked-up it was."

"I just remember craziness, fucking drugs, alcohol, chicks – you name it, I did it," says Jonathan.

"We were 25 to 28 years old, so it was like party central," recalls Head. "There wasa lot of alcohol. Thousandsand thousands of dollars! We were out of control! When you party so hard at that age it's a lot of fun, but it was the beginning of a lot of messed-up lives."



Remarkably, in the midst of all this mayhem, a classic album was somehow taking shape, with Jonathan writing some of his deepest and darkest lyrics, like *Freak On A Leash* and *Pretty* – the horrific tale of the rape and murder of a baby, prompted by his time working in a coroner's office. Not that this darkness was any surprise to the rest of the band.

"What he sang about was always dark," says Munky, "and even when he sings something uplifting, the band leans towards a minor key. It's just who we are. We always have a darker sound, whether it's lyrically or melodies. I'm used to him writing that way, and none of us have ever said, 'You shouldn't say that.' As a lyricist and singer, you have to be very vulnerable and expose part of who you are, and that takes a lot of courage. He exposes a lot of fear and anxiety, and ultimately that helps people because it makes them feel less alone. He's digging so deep that nothing he pulls up cannot be gold or diamonds."

Korn also had some impressive guests on the album. Along with Fred Durst – hey, it was a big deal back then – and Tre Hardson from alternative rappers The Pharcyde, they managed to get NWA's Ice Cube and no less a legend than Cheech Marin, with whom Munky smoked more than a few joints.

"I think the Cheech thing came about from Fieldy," Munky smiles. "He loves smoking weed! It's the funniest thing, because he used to hate it, and then he went through this weed phase, watching all the *Cheech & Chong* movies. Then we were messing around in the studio playing [*Life Is Peachy*'s War cover] *Lowrider*, and he was like, 'Wouldn't it be awesome if we could get Cheech in the studio!' He was a super-nice guy and he brought his family to the show, later in that tour cycle. Then Ice Cube came into the studio and that was the first time I'd witnessed a real pro, someone that came in and killed it. He listened to the track a few times, studied it, didn't talk much and was very serious about his craft. I was blown away and it was really inspiring."

"My heart was pounding!" confesses Head, completely starstruck by meeting Ice Cube. "I had to come up with a cool riff and not let him down, and I'm shaking! Pressure! It was surreal, dude. When I was 19 or 20 I was all over NWA. The realness and the rawness... And Ice Cube's voice tones were just the best."

With the album completed and iconic artwork done by comic book creator Todd McFarlane, who later directed the award-winning video for *Freak On A Leash*, it wasn't long before Korn, too, experienced those dizzying levels of fame. *Follow* ▶

Korn: ahead of the game

The Leader was released on August 18, 1998 and went to Number One in four countries, including the US, making it their biggest-selling record to date. And while the band had been primed to expect huge success, confident that they'd made a great album that was unlike anything else, they had no idea how huge it would be. Head remembers that they were on the Korn Kampaign meet-and-greet tour when they heard that the album had reached the top of the charts.

"I was in a record store signing records," he says. "I don't remember the city, but I called my dad, like, 'Dad, we went to Number One!' He was always the type who was telling me to cut my hair, so he got to a place where he was like, 'Man, I was wrong about you. I should have just let you be you.' That was really cool of him to say."

If the album was big, then the singles – *Got The Life* and *Freak On A Leash* – were bigger, and they propelled the band to "a whole new level of fame" remembers Head. *Got The Life* was actually the first video to be officially 'retired' from MTV's *Total Live Request* show, because fans wouldn't stop requesting it. Korn were everywhere.

Korn not only sounded completely different to what had gone before, they didn't look like traditional metallers either

GETTY X2

"Yeah, it got pretty crazy, and the fame did go to our heads a little bit and made us a little crazy," says Head. "Jonathan got suicidal because he was drinking so much Jack and Coke and doing cocaine. He was losing his mind, and he decided to stop it all and get sober during that tour cycle."

"IT WENT TO OUR HEADS. WE WENT CRAZY. JONATHAN WAS SUICIDAL"

BRIAN 'HEAD' WELCH

In September 1998, the band went out ontheir own Family Values tour, taking along Rammstein, Ice Cube, Limp Bizkit and Orgy. The partying continued, but Jonathan sat out on the sidelines.

"It was detoxing," he says. "All I remember is a lot of pain and anxiety and horrible shit. I would lie shaking in my bunk, and I'd get out onstage, and I could perform but then I'd go back to going through hell again. My therapy was that I'd hang out with my dear friend Rigger Dan. He passed away a long time ago, God bless him, but he taught me how to tie different kinds of knots, and I'd help him rig the show every night. I got involved with the crew, because everyone else was partying, and I couldn't be part of that."

Meanwhile, Head was still keeping up the lifestyle, struggling to reconcile the guy he was before Korn with this new celebrity rockstar. He put up a decent front, but behind the scenes he was troubled.

"The friends I grew up with, and the guy I looked in the mirror at, they all became different people. I just couldn't control the habits," he admits. "I wanted to drink alcohol and have fun, and maybe do drugs once in a while, but I didn't want them to rule me. Also, my personality... I was good with the guys and I could have fun, but in relationships I was insecure and I never felt good enough. When the fame came, it just magnified all those insecurities."

"It was good in the sense that we were able to buy new cars and upgrade from apartments to condos," adds Munky. "But it was also bad to give five guys money – we were all addicts, just buying alcohol and not thinking about tomorrow or our future. I didn't really deal with it very well. The money was new to us – we didn't grow up with money – so it wasn't like we had some financial advisor sitting us down and going, 'You need to put money away.' None of us had any of that until a few years ago, which is kinda sad.

"It was tough; you have all this money and a lotof addiction problems, and you buy dumb shit when you're fucked up! Cars and boats, there's no appreciation. And all of a sudden you have this crew of 10 people, all these guys whowanna leach off you and pretend that they're helping you. But the only person that's gonna help you is your mom. Everybody else is out to fucking take your money and it took me a while to see that."

Older now, and much wiser, the band have had time to reflect upon the extraordinary success of the record, and its legacy. There can be no doubt that it dragged a new (or nu) sound into the mainstream, and its influence is still heard today.

"There's also a lot of hip hop guys who got into that album,15 or 20 years younger than me, and that stuff influenced a lot of urban kids, which is cool," says Munky in conclusion. "And it's tricky keeping people's attention and keeping them as fans, but we had hardcore fans from the first records and *Follow The Leader* blew us up. I'm floored by it."

(HED)P.E.

Nu metal's most underrated OGs

SOME BANDS WERE BORN into nu metal. Others had nu metal thrust upon them. (Hed)P.E. were in the latter camp.

The six-piece emerged from the energy vortex that was the early 90s Orange County scene, hitching the in-your-face approach of hardcore and metal to hip hop's street swagger. But it was their connection to fellow Huntington Beach denizens Korn that saw (Hed)P.E. (the 'P.E.' stood for 'Planetary Evolution,' 'Planet Earth' or 'Public Enemies,' depending on which day you caught them) co-opted into the nu metal movement.

It was a good fit. Their self-titled debut album, released in 1997, followed the template with its jagged guitar, full-on scratching and livewire frontman Jahred's (aka MCUD) dexterous rapping. But it was 2000's *Broke*, that sealed the deal in nu metal terms – System Of A Down's Serj Tankian and Kittie's Morgan Lander rocked up on the infectious *Feel Good*, while *Bartender* remains one of the era's all-time great anthems. They had their detractors – critics took umbrage at the misogyny in some of Jahred's lyrics, but the singer denied that he was sexist, claiming that he was button-pushing.

In the end, it didn't matter anyway. Despite their electrifying live shows, (Hed)P.E. failed to replicate the success of Korn, System Of A Down and, most gallingly, Limp Bizkit, a band who took what they did and spun it into gold. The band weathered label and line-up changes, releasing a steady stream of albums that upheld their groundbreaking legacy. They're still out there, flying the flag for the LA scene, even if they remain the most under-rated of nu metal's founding generation.

(Hed)P.E.: Orange County firebrands

GETTY/MICK HUTSON

FAMILY VALUES

Korn in East Rutherford, New Jersey on the third date of the inaugural 1998 Family Values tour

ALL IN THE FAMILY

GETTY

In 1998, Korn teamed with up with Limp Bizkit, Orgy, Ice Cube and a pre-superstardom Rammstein for the wildly successful Family Values tour. This is how it all went down – riots and all…

WORDS: IAN FORTNAM

The planets had been aligning for some time, from the crucible of Def Jam cross-fertilisation, through the industrial/funk fusions of Ministry, Rd Hot Chili Peppers, Nine Inch Nails, Tool and Faith No More. Pantera brought the groove, Public Enemy and Anthrax combined to bring the noise, and with Ross Robinson officiating as production midwife, Korn, Deftones and Limp Bizkit ultimately begat nu metal. The word was out but needed spreading, and it was Korn's inaugural Family Values package tour of autumn 1998 that ultimately saw nu metal hijack the US mainstream consciousness.

The startling line-up initially allied scene leaders Korn and stars-in-waiting Limp Bizkit. They were joined by newly imported, pyro-heavy, Teutonic controversy magnets Rammstein, here-today-gone-tomorrow deathpop pretty boys Orgy and, most crucially, ex-NWA gangsta rap heavyweight Ice Cube. Family Values spread the gospel of cross-generic, hip hop-literate, groove-infused modern metal.

There was little doubt the sell-out crowd that caught the tour on its final Halloween date at the 10,000-capacity Patriot Center in Fairfax, Virginia were fully intending to party. There ostensibly to catch the dildo-happy, spontaneously combusting mensch machine that was Rammstein, we were immediately struck by the audience demographic: there were way more women here than you'd usually expect to find at a 90s rock show. The bill, the very definition of the rising nu metal zeitgeist, was attracting a different kind of punter. By blending metal and rap, cranking up the underlying groove, and distilling the whole shebang into a decidedly more danceable and inclusive whole, Korn had stumbled upon a new evolutionary strand. Moreover, it was a strand that had mass appeal.

Bringing the ruckus: Ice Cube

CLARENCE DAVIS/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE/GETTY

As Orgy preened, we battled our way through a language barrier into the Rammstein psyche. Recently pilloried in the British press, the band were incredibly difficult, then thawed to merely distracted. Unsurprising when you consider what was about to happen. As they took to the stage, Till Lindemann burst into flames – situation normal there then – but then he dropped his chainmail. Aside from tiny scraps of gaffa tape, Rammstein were completely naked, and before you could say 'spurting prosthetic cocks', a burly pair of gun-toting representatives of Virginia's finest marched onto the stage and arrested the entire band for the second time on the tour. A riot ensued, but it was a good-natured one – the kind of riot where frisbees are thrown rather than molotov cocktails – which in essence encapsulated the spirit of Family Values in a nutshell.

Since the date had been advertised and subsequently sold out, Ice Cube (committed to shoot scenes for the movie *Next Friday*) had pulled out of this final leg of the tour and his place taken by the funk-fuelled Incubus. But Cube's non-appearance didn't instigate insurrection or even empty seats in an arena almost exclusively populated by rock and metal fans. For while rock audiences seemed delighted to assimilate hip hop culture, traffic seemed distinctly one way.

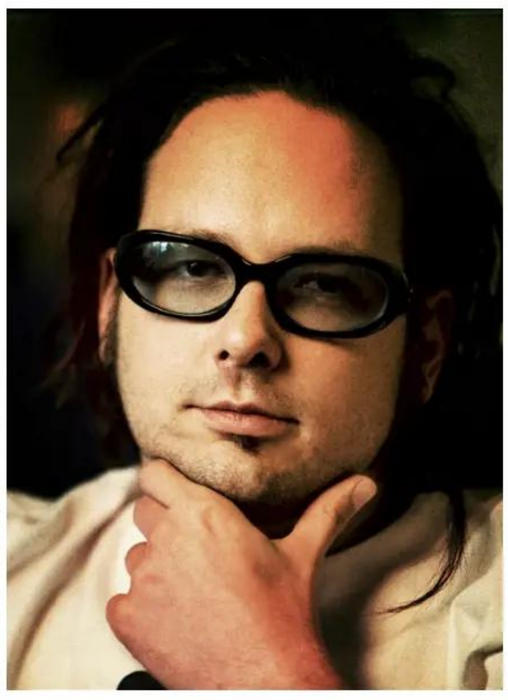
Fairfax's Patriot Center lapped up Incubus and warmed to the personality of Fred Durst (imagine that), before the Adidas-clad Korn absolutely creamed all comers, their Limp Bizkit-enhanced encore of *All In The Family* casually defining the imminent brave nu future of metal.

SCOTT HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

Frying tonight: Rammstein lead singer Till Lindeman's flammable trenchcoat

DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

"ASIDE FROM TINY SCRAPS OF GAFFA TAPE, RAMMSTEIN WERE COMPLETELY NAKED"



NIELS VAN IPEREN/GETTY IMAGES

"IT WAS A TURNING POINT FOR HEAVY MUSIC"

Korn's Jonathan Davis on the genesis of the Family Values tour

"THIS IDEA STARTED super early. For years, we wanted to do a festival and put something together that was new. We went back and forth with our management and figured out what we were going for and how to do it. It was fun to do.

"It was about showing what was going on at that time. We were at a turning point in heavy music and it felt huge and we wanted to put something on that showed what the fuck was going on. Everyone was given a full production so it felt like you were getting a headline show from all of the bands: Limp Bizkit with their big-ass spaceship, and we had the Korn Kage that put kids on the stage, rocking out with us. I think the cage was Fieldy's idea and, to this day, I still think it's one of the coolest things we've ever done.

"It served its purpose in the way it exposed people to what was going on at that time and what we were doing in Korn. It blew everything up. It was the first time we ever played arenas and it seemed everyone who was on that tour – except for Cube, who was already huge – blew up and were playing bigger shows after. It was a stepping stone to all of our bands and that scene taking over for a couple of years.

"We were convinced we needed to have a hip hop act on there. We all listened to hip hop at that time and it was a big influence on us and the scene, and who better than Ice Cube? That was the shit. It was awesome. That guy is a legend and people had to respect that. I didn't worry about the crowd not taking to him at all because he ripped it up every night and you can't deny that. He was bringing old NWA into his set and the crowd loved it. The kids who liked us and Bizkit came from the same school of thought as us so having Cube on there made total sense to everyone.

"We always tried to get Deftones on the tour but we could never figure it out. Other than that, it was the exact bill that we wanted. Everyone hung out and it was a good time, but it was when I was dealing with anxiety for the first time so I spent a lot of time in my bunk. I remember everyone in the band had a great time and got along with every other band and there was no bitching – it was an amazing tour.

"Family Values could definitely happen again. I'd like to bring out trap artists and things reflecting what's going on right now in music, just like we did back in the day. There's plenty of aggressive acts in all forms of music that could tour together and do a new Family Values so it's definitely something we could look at doing again in the future."

THE BAND THAT MADE METAL A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

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THE STORY BEHIND

JUMPDAFUCKUP BY SOULFLY

The pressure was on for Soulfly to match their groundbreaking debut. With help from their friends – including rising star Corey Taylor – they surpassed it

WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

WHEN MAX CAVALERA abruptly left Sepultura – the band he'd formed in 1984 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil – at the end of their 1996 Roots, it was one of the biggest and most surprising shocks in metal. Sepultura had become global superstars and with the previous year's *Roots* album had stamp their own unique imprint on the burgeoning nu metal movement, but the singer walked out after a sold-out show at London's Brixton Academy, much to their fans' surprise. To Max's credit, he hadn't even got off the plane home before he set plans in motion for Soulfly, and in 1998 his new band released one of the best debut records of the decade with their self-titled effort.

Getting the thumbs-up from critics and fans alike, *Soulfly* proved that Max had something of a metal Midas touch. But if *Soulfly* represented a glorious comeback, then the pressure of following it up loomed large.

"You can't keep doing the same thing," Max tells us today. "You gotta find ways of making new records as exciting as they can be."

After the success of *Soulfly*, Max sought out other ways to keep his band fresh. His solution this time was to scour the scene to find other big-name artists from metal and beyond to lend their voice alongside his. It was this search that led him to plucking an up-and-coming musician from the backwoods of Iowa and bringing him into the studio to write one of the most enduring songs of his career. This is the wild, magical story of *Jumpdafuckup*.

"*Primitive* is a strange album," says Max of Soulfly's second record. "It's an idea that was pretty much borrowed from hip hop. A lot of 90s hip hop had a lot of guests and I thought, 'Why can't we do that with metal? That would be cool!' That was the main idea of *Primitive*, it was a fearless record. You have [son of late Beatle John Lennon] Sean Lennon and Tom Araya on the same record, Slayer and the Beatles! How do you even connect them? Then you have a heavy song like *Jumpdafuckup*."

After settling on the decision to make their new album a jam-and-collaboration-heavy affair, Max roped in the aforementioned Slayer frontman and Beatles offspring alongside Deftones' Chino Moreno, Will Haven's Grady Avenell and, for the album's definitive piece, Corey Taylor. At that point, Corey was still a new (and as-yet-unrevealed) face in the metal scene, Slipknot's groundbreaking 1999 debut – and incendiary performances on that year's Ozzfest – having only recently thrust his band into the spotlight. Max remembers his first exposure to Slipknot with fondness.

"A friend of mine, Joey, was good friends with Paul [Gray, late Slipknot bassist]," Max tells us. "He showed me *Wait And Bleed*, and I loved that first record, it was phenomenal. They were on tour and had a date in Phoenix, so Joey brought Paul to my house and

Paul confessed that he was a member of the Sepultura fanclub, the Nomadic Warriors. He had the card with him in his wallet, pulled it out and showed me. That was fucking cool, man. It was a moment."

Max decided to reach out to Corey to ask him to guest on a song on *Primitive*. Corey, a huge Sepultura and Soulfly fan, didn't need any convincing.

"*Jumpdafuckup* came out of nowhere," Corey tells us. "Max's people hit me up, like, 'Do you wanna do a song with Max?' Of course I do! What are you, fucking nuts?"

Corey was in, but little did he know that Max had been wrestling with the song while trying to get it right.

"I struggled with that opening riff for about five hours in the studio," laughs Max. "I was getting mad at my guitar, flipping it off, calling it names. I kept fucking with it. It's a simple riff but I wasn't getting it, so I smashed the guitar to pieces. Really rock'n'roll! So, I went outside, cleared my head. When I came back in and grabbed another guitar, the first time I played the riff, it came out. It came from the sky, a light came down. It was incredible! That gave birth to the whole song."

With the music finished, it was time to get Corey in to perform his part. It's

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THE FACTS

RELEASED:
2000

ALBUM:
Primitive

PERSONNEL:
Max Cavalera (vocals), Corey Taylor (vocals), Mikey Doling (guitar), Marcelo D. Rapp (bass/percussion), Joe Nunez (drums), Toby Wright (keyboards), Larry McDonald (percussion), Meia Noite (percussion)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
N/A

Max Cavalera: jumping da fuck up, and fucking shit up

here, on a day that Max describes as a "saga", that the story of *Jumpdafuckup* gets really outrageous.

"Corey was playing in Arizona the week we were in the studio," Max recalls excitedly. "We already had the song, all the music was recorded, so me and my friend drove to the venue, and they're just about to soundcheck and I shout, 'Hey Corey, what's up! We have to go to the studio and record!' We pretty much kidnapped him! 'Fuck your soundcheck!' We put him in this piece-of-shit car in the desert."

"I went down to the studio, and [producer] Toby Wright's there, Max is there, it was almost kismet," Corey says. "They basically gave me a blank cheque on the verses."

"He went in blind," hoots Max. "And he picked all the right spots! How crazy is that?! He wrote all those lyrics in the chair! That's magic, man. That's like witnessing insanity."

With the song now fully written, the two icons of metal went into the vocal booth and created a landmark moment.

"WE KIDNAPPED COREY TAYLOR IN A SHIT CAR"

MAX CAVALERA

"Corey loves the song and he's going apeshit," grins Max. "He's killing it, too, those verses are amazing. I love that whole ending, it's one of the hardest things ever. We were listening back, jumping, headbanging."

"We got round the mic and sang it together," Corey says. "Dude, it was one of the best experiences of my life! It was my first real taste of doing something with a peer… Well, not even a peer, but a hero! It was fucking Max Cavalera! I'd kind of blown my voice out singing in the studio and had barely anything left for the show, but it was one of the best days of my life."

It's a sentiment shared by Max, who left the studio and went back to the venue to watch Slipknot that evening.

"An amazing day of recording, then I see Slipknot the same night," he smiles at the memory. "I'm headbanging, I've got my kids with me, my wife, they put me on this private balcony. If you've seen [1984 movie] *Amadeus*, you'll remember that part where he goes to see his friend playing and he is on the balcony partying – I felt like that. I dunno, there's a connection there somewhere. It was one of the best days of my life – such a metal day."

The only problem that arose was ▶

Cello Dias, aka Marcelo D. Rapp, handled bass duties on the first three Soulfly albums

"WE WERE LIKE THE WU-TANG CLAN OF METAL"

MAX CAVALERA

that Soulfly wanted to include a picture of every collaborator in the liner notes of the album. But Corey's image was still very much under strict protection at that time.

"Back then, no one knew what Corey looked like because they were still just wearing the masks," chuckles Max. "So we used a picture of Corey's back – you can see the tattoo on his neck."

Primitive was released on September 26, 2000, entering the US Billboard Top 200 at No.32, which remains Soulfly's highest position. Much of its success was thanks to the crushing, careering grooves and furious tag-teaming vocals between Max and Corey on *Jumpdafuckup*. It probably didn't hurt that there was a big dollop of melody in there as well.

"It's Soulfly flirting with Tool a little bit," Max says. "I think if you listen to the verses, especially Corey's, there are very Tool basslines and percussion. I think it comes a little bit from that."

At the turn of the millennium, Soulfly also toured with a bunch of heavy hitters: Rammstein, Pantera, Slayer, Morbid Angel, In Flames, and even Skunk Anansie. "It would never happen now!" Max laughs.

Over the last two decades, Soulfly have frequently changed styles, experimenting with death, thrash and groove metal. Last year's *Totem* proves that Max is still finding new ways of making music exciting, emboldened by the success of that second Soulfly record. *Jumpdafuckup* remains one of their definitive anthems and their most listened-to song on streaming services, with more than 31 million streams on Spotify alone.

"I love that it's one of our biggest-selling records," Max tells us. "It was the idea, the jam idea… we were like the Wu-Tang Clan of metal."

As for why *Jumpdafuckup* has continued to connect so many years after its birth, Max believes the story behind the creation of the song has given it a sort of magic that can still be heard all these years later.

"That's maybe why it's one of our biggest songs," he muses. "All this stuff went into the making of the song, it's like a whole soap opera. That's what life is about – experience as much as you can. I love that I could be part of all these different scenes. It made me a better person."

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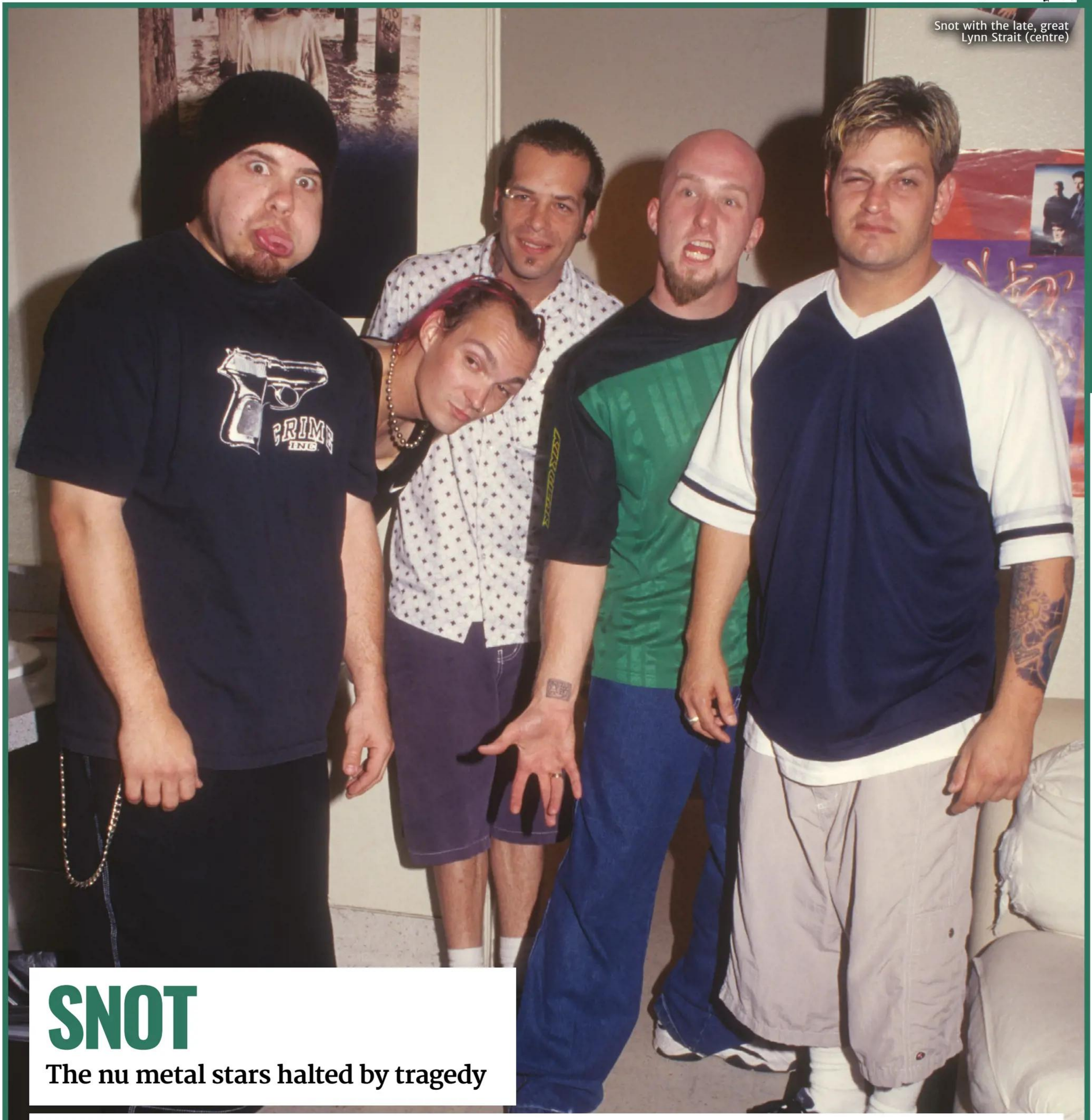

Snot with the late, great Lynn Strait (centre)

GETTY/JIM STEINFELDT

SNOT

The nu metal stars halted by tragedy

SNOT WERE SET to become nu metal's next breakout band when they released their debut album *Get Some* in March 1997. The Santa Barbara five-piece swapped the angst of Korn for larger-than-life party-hard swagger. And in singer Lynn Strait, they had a charisma bomb waiting to explode.

Formed in 1995, they carved out a name for themselves on the West Coast club scene alongside Coal Chamber, Incubus and System Of A Down. Lynn himself was a livewire onstage and off – he'd done jail time for weapons violations and assaulting a cop, though he was a charming rogue rather than a hardened thug.

Wherever Lynn went, his beloved boxer dog Dobbs was by his side, and it was Dobbs' face that peered out from the cover of *Get Some* when it was released via Geffen in the Spring of 1997. The album found Lynn drawing on his experiences with drugs and crime for inspiration – one song, *Stoopid* had been written while he was in jail for some transgression or other.

Snot hit the road in support of the album, bagging a spot on the 1998 Ozzfest, where the singer was arrested for indecent exposure after stripping off onstage during Limp Bizkit's set. Everything was pointing towards Korn-sized greatness when disaster struck. On December 11, 1998, Lynn was killed in a car smash en route from Santa Barbara to LA. His dog Dobbs died with him.

Snot's second album, 2000's *Strait Up*, was a tribute to the vocalist – with Jonathan Davis, Fred Durst and more, depping for their fallen friend. By that point, nu metal was the defining sound of the era. It's a tragedy that Lynn Strait wasn't around to be part of it.

The men behind their eponymous debut album; note how the masks have evolved over the years

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Released in 1999, Slipknot's self-titled album hit with the same seismic impact as Black Sabbath's debut and Metallica's *Kill 'Em All*. This is how nine outcasts from the Mid-West changed the game virtually overnight...

WORDS: TOMMY UDO

"IF TRUTH BE TOLD IT WAS really my wife who persuaded me to sign Slipknot",' recalls Roadrunner Records A&R supremo Monte Conner, the man who signed Slipknot. "I really wasn't sure. I liked them but I was prevaricating. That and a character that they had in the band at that time – called, I think, The Baby [actually the mentalist Cuddles] – swung me."

Welcome to the mid 90s, a period that seems almost as remote as the Dark Ages in terms of the phenomenal changes that we have seen in heavy music and in the lives of nine [or so] crazy kids from the Mid-Western USA who had an idealistic dream to scare the living piss out of the whole motherfucking planet.

"*Slipknot* is still the heaviest album ever to make it onto the Billboard Top 3",' says Corey Taylor. "There's no doubt that the album opened the door to a lot more very extreme bands crossing into the mainstream",' says Monte Connor.

"It set the bar",' agrees Joey Jordison.

In retrospect, Slipknot's 1999 self-titled album was a major change in metal. Until then, bands were still caught up in the fallout from grunge, and while the lightweight pop-metal of bands such as Korn, Limp Bizkit and others were keeping hard rock alive and on permanent rotation on MTV, there was nothing outside of the underground to challenge the old guard of Slayer, Metallica and Megadeth, nothing with any real substance.

ALL IMAGES: PRESS

Slipknot had no idea what they were going to sound like when they formed: stuck in dead-end bands and dead-end day jobs, they wanted to do something – anything – to get the fuck right out of that life. "Back at the time, there was no metal going on in Des Moines, there was no hardcore, nothing. We had all been in bands that had opened up for each other, and the scene had become just terrible. No one really gave a fuck about music, so we formed Slipknot",' says Corey Taylor.

Shawn Crahan used to frequent a club in Des Moines called The Runway where cover bands and tribute bands would try to outshine each other in their slavish imitation of other bands. When the only two original metal bands in Des Moines that he liked broke up, he knew it was time for him to do it himself. Along with vocalist Anders Colsefni and Paul Gray, he formed a band called Meld. Local drummer Joey Jordison was persuaded to come and watch them rehearse: one song they played that night was called Slipknot. He knew there and then that he had to be in.

Joey Jordison worked as a night manager at a gas station. He'd leave band practice at 10pm, take a radio and TV to the gas station and crank metal out all night. Shawn Crahan would come down and they'd start plotting things out. When he left at 5am, they had worked out the blueprint for the band that Slipknot would eventually become. Then he got fired because he was scaring the customers away. "We literally had people pull up, see me and Shawn sitting in the window, floor it out of there and go to the Amoco station across the street."

Slipknot's live shows around the period between 1995 and 1998 were occasionally shambolic affairs, played out in bars in the bad ▶

"IT WAS VIOLENT. THINGS WERE GETTING BROKEN. IT GOT CRAZY REALLY QUICKLY"

ROSS ROBINSON

Boiler suited and booted: Slipknot go to work.

part of town to at best indifferent and at worst hostile crowds.

Line-ups changed: original guitarists Donnie Steele and Josh Brainard left, the former after he "found Christ," the latter lost interest. Anders Colsefni left in 1997 and was replaced by Corey Taylor who the band had met when they faced off against Stone Sour in a Battle Of The Bands contest. Craig Jones was tapped to replace Donnie, but he was moved to samples and Mick Thomson joined as lead guitarist. When Josh bolted, Corey suggested a replacement, James Root, from his old band Stone Sour. The band found DJ Sid Wilson later on, and the incarnation of Slipknot that we all love to hate was formed.

There were a few labels interested in Slipknot, particularly in the wake of their debut release *Mate. Feed. Kill. Repeat*, essentially a collection of demo-quality tracks that gives us a snapshot of a band not quite fully formed.

"There were a few tracks on that record that were good that ended up being redone on the first Roadrunner album," says Roadrunner's Monte Connor.

As well as Connor, producer Ross Robinson – then riding high on the success of his work with Korn and Limp Bizkit – had heard the album and went to Des Moines to see the band himself, intending to sign them to his IAM imprint. After seeing them and hanging out with them in strip bars – "Des Moines' main form of entertainment," says Corey Taylor a tad wearily – Robinson was impressed by their dedication and by their vision. It was the alchemical reaction that would turn base metal to gold.

Thanks in part to Robinson and Monte Connor's wife, Slipknot were signed and travelled out to Robinson's Indigo Ranch studio in California to start work on the album. For a time, Robinson seemed to be the only person who was totally convinced by Slipknot. As far as the band were concerned, they'd written the album for themselves and had no idea that anyone else outside of their friends and family would buy it.

"We hadn't recorded the album yet; we hadn't gone out and toured; we didn't know how people were going to take us. So we'd just written the songs for us. There was no audience until then," says Corey.

The band travelled economy class in those days and slept where they fell, on couches and on armchairs if they were lucky, on hard floors if not. Robinson has a reputation as a producer who lays down challenges to bands to get the best work out of them; with Slipknot it was a two-way street.

"I was working out every day just to stay on top of that record," Robinson, a man who seems

ALL IMAGES: PRESS

to hyperventilate with enthusiasm in everyday conversations, told *Hammer*. "It was spontaneous, it was violent. Things were getting broken. We were out there away from anyone else, nobody dropping by or hanging out, it got crazy really quickly."

"Ross had me pounding that kit so hard that my hands were bleeding, and that was when we were just setting up the drum levels. My hands were covered in these bloody bandages," says Joey.

"Ross pushed us and we pushed back," says Corey. "It was a fight. Ross was throwing punches at us. He was so into it. You can hear that on the record."

"It's a piece of magic," says Robinson. "We made it for us."

It was a brutal, desensitised catalogue of rage and despair. It was like a fusion of the most extreme hip-hop with the most extreme metal. In the raw blast of *Eyeless*, Corey Taylor screams: *"Insane – Am I the only muthafucker with a brain?/I'm hearing voices but all they do is complain/How many times have you wanted to kill/Everything and everyone – Say you'll do it but never will/You can't see California without Marlon Brando's eyes/I am my Father's son/He's a phantom, a mystery and that leaves me/Nothing!/ How many times have you wanted to die?/It's too late for me/All you have to do is get rid of me!"*

The song was inspired by the schizophrenic ravings of a street dweller that the band met in New York when they were visiting the offices of Roadrunner Records to sign their contract.

According to Mick Thomson: "He was running around, screaming it at everyone. Though I think his choice of actor was pretty cool. He was off his shit."

In the more defiant *Surfacing* Corey sings: *"Fuck it all/Fuck this world/Fuck everything that you stand for/Don't belong/Don't exist/Don't give a shit/Don't ever judge me."*

But the truly terrifying *Scissors*, an unconnected, rambling stream of consciousness evocative of a deranged killer, was the album's 'money shot,' the equivalent of Linda Blair's 360 degree headspin in *The Exorcist* or the chest-burster in *Alien*: *"I play doctor for five minutes flat/Before I cut my heart open and let the air out/Three bugs, a pound of dust/Some wind spilled before me In the strangest manner that had/Broke away my tear spout".*

It may have sounded like horror comic stuff to some critics, but there was a basis in the very real human pain that some of the band's members had suffered. Rumours of child abuse, suicide attempts and a mania for self-slashing added to the band's mystique.

In an interview with *Metal Hammer* at the time, Joey Jordison said: "You stick nine guys together who have had no outlet for their whole lives, and you live in Iowa and you come out on a fucking stage, then you have some shit to portray. We were walking around like ghosts, slitting our wrists open saying, 'Please take a look at this, look at what we are trying to do'. When we put it together and came to doing a live show all the elements of being downgraded, not appreciated, being given nothing because we live in such a shithole, all that came out. There is no way you can go through life thinking everything is great because it's not. Look at all the fucked-up shit that goes on. The world is a sick fucking place. The fact is you can come to our show and get all your aggressions out and go away feeling relieved. I want everyone to get a rush of emotion from it."

The band's self-titled debut album was the most successful record Roadrunner ever had, with only Coal Chamber coming close. The rapid success of the album owed a lot to the rather shrewd decision to buy Slipknot onto the opening slot of the 1999 Ozzfest tour.

The band struck up a good relationship with Jack Osbourne, who had a hand in booking subsequent tours. Without the benefit of support from press, radio or MTV, the album became a cult item that went platinum within three months of release. This allowed them to obviously shock the shit out of the mainstream; the music and the image guaranteed fodder for the ban-it brigade in the wake of the Columbine shootings.

But the first people to turn their noses up were not concerned Conservative Christians, it was the metal underground, who wrote them off as another addition to the nu-metal canon – something the band bristled against

Joey: "If you listen to a song like *Get This* from the digipack, or *Surfacing* or *[sic]* or even like fucking *Scissors*, the roots are death metal, thrash, speed metal, and I could go on and on about all those bands. I know all the songs, and I know every fucking label… the underground metal kids should also be happy because the current success of Slipknot, on songs like *Surfacing* and *[sic]* that have super-fast 16th-note double-bass – none of those fuckers in the other bands they lump us with could contend with that."

"ROSS HAD ME POUNDING THAT KIT SO HARD THAT MY HANDS WERE BLEEDING. THEY WERE COVERED IN THESE BLOODY BANDAGES"

JOEY JORDISON

Papa Roach spent years slogging away in a city known for onion farming. But with the explosive *Infest*, they became an overnight sensation

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

HOME INVASION

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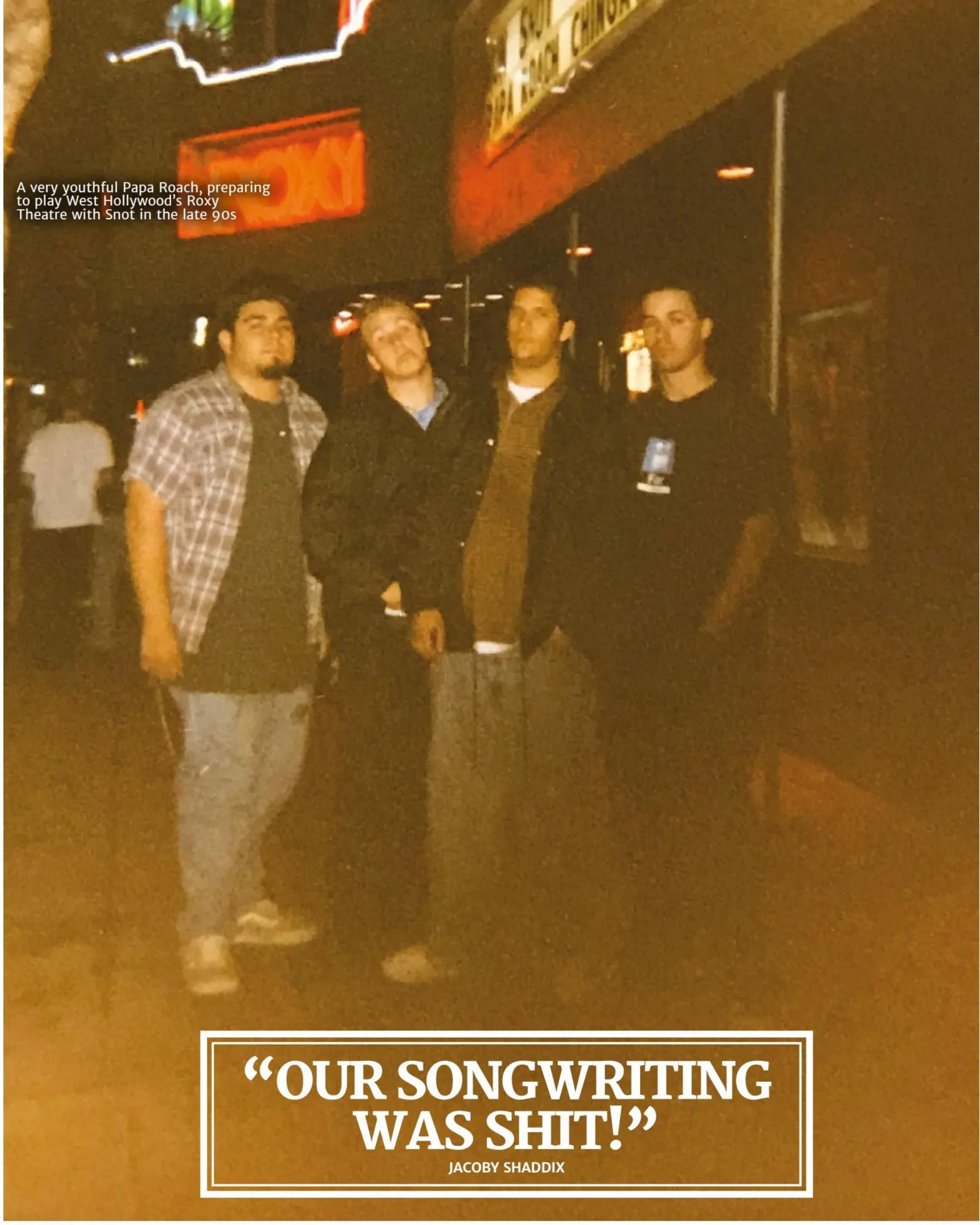
PAPA ROACH



A very youthful Papa Roach, preparing to play West Hollywood's Roxy Theatre with Snot in the late 90s

"OUR SONGWRITING WAS SHIT!"

JACOBY SHADDIX

Vacaville High School, California. 1993. Jacoby Shaddix and his bandmates have just played their first Papa Roach gig, at the talent show, and are convinced they have won first prize. Lined up onstage in the auditorium alongside an assortment of gymnasts, violinists and singers, in front of their parents and a hundred other onlookers, they excitedly wait for the results to be announced. This is it. They nailed it. They were better than everyone else. And then… defeat. Disappointment. Confusion. The winner is… a classically trained pianist?

"They called the other girl's name and I was like… damn. That was my first taste of humble pie!" Jacoby laughs today over a Zoom chat from his home in Sacramento, his hairless cat Harry lurking in the background. I was like, 'Fuck this, this is lame dude, this shit's rigged!' I wasn't like Kanye West or anything and took her award, or was a dick to her, but my head hung low."

But if we've learnt anything about Jacoby Shaddix over the years, it's that nothing can keep him down. Papa Roach rallied, hustled and evolved, and seven years later would land one of the biggest hits of the 2000s with their major-label debut album, *Infest*. It would go on to sell seven million copies worldwide and, in *Last Resort*, spawn one of the most enduring songs in heavy music's history. From a school performance consisting mainly of noise, featuring a trombone player but no guitarist, Papa Roach got off to a wobbly start, but a start nonetheless.

"I thought we were the shit. I was delusional. We were terrible. We sounded like trash. Our songwriting was shit. But it was the beginnings," smiles Jacoby.

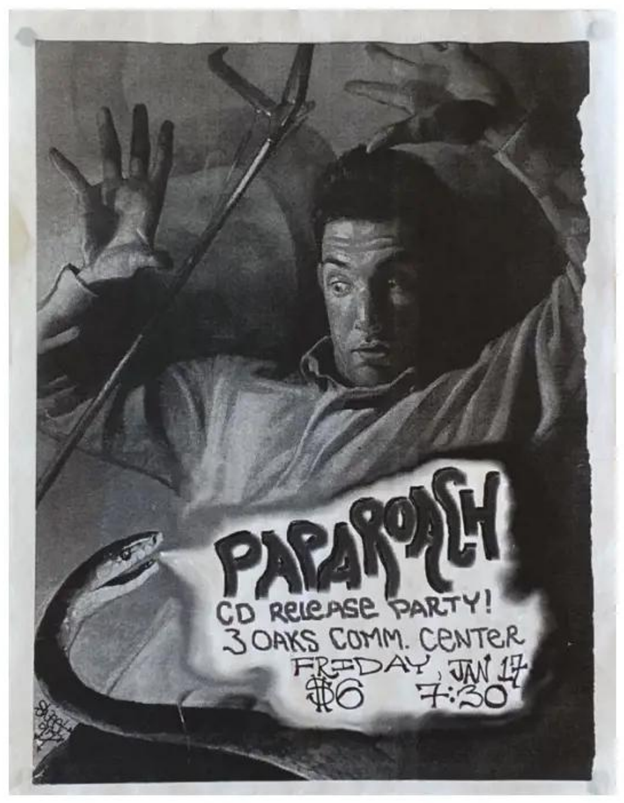
Jacoby Shaddix was a sophomore when he invited new kid Dave Buckner to sit with him on the school bus, and the pair swiftly became fast friends. They both played football and drums, and ended up combining their set-ups to make one mega-kit. Conceding that Dave was the better sticksman, Jacoby bought a bass so they could jam. When it got stolen and he couldn't afford a new one, his buddy Dave devised an ingenious solution. "Dave was like, 'Just be a singer, man, that shit's free!" Jacoby chuckles.

They roped in schoolfriend Will James on bass and, as it was the era of ska-punk and Jacoby played clarinet in the school band, a trombone player. Jacoby christened the quintet Papa Roach after his step-grandfather, Bill Roatch. It was a quirky name like his heroes in Mr. Bungle, and besides, a cockroach was *cool*. It stood for resilience. For invading. After suffering their great talent show failure, they ditched the brass section and realised they needed a guitarist, setting their sights on acquaintance Jerry Horton from nearby Vanden High School. Jerry, in the year above and with heavier tastes, needed some convincing. "He wasn't very interested," explains Jacoby. "He was more into Front 242 and Slayer and Ministry and Metallica; I was into Red Hot Chili Peppers and Mr. Bungle and Fugazi and Social Distortion and shit like that. But I harassed his ass and he finally came to practice, and bam!"

Making music in their garages, hopping between them as various parents tired of the racket, the band were having fun, although football practice began to encroach on band practice. Eventually, Jacoby and Dave snapped and quit the team. "We went to Hell Week," says Jacoby, screwing up his face as he recalls the mandatory intensive training regime at the start of the season. "This is at a college up in Nevada, and you do two practices a day for a week straight, and it's just *brutal*. I had diarrhoea the whole fucking time, because the food was terrible, and we were working our assess off. Dave and I got back and looked at each other like, 'Fuck! I just wanna *rock*, dude!'"

Vacaville, population 81,000, was a stultifying place to be a teenager. Nestled between San Francisco and Sacramento, the archetypal slice of American suburbia was best known for its former onion industry (a fact Papa Roach would playfully acknowledge, self-releasing music via Onion Hardcore Records and promoting shows under the banner Onion Hardcore Productions). The band

The guys in 1998. Not so much Coachella as Couchella...



ALL PAPA ROACH ARCHIVES

and their friends would drive to shows in the big cities, but were desperate for their own scene, and so they set about creating one.

Armed with their 1995 demo, *Caca Bonita*, P-Roach brought the party to local living rooms and backyards and bars, waiting in the car pack until showtime because they were underage. Vacaville's Three Oaks Community Center allowed them to put on shows if they donated the revenue back to the city (by the time they took off, they had raised enough for a skate park).

As Papa Roach gathered speed, they began playing Sacramento venues such as The Press Club, The Cattle Club and Big Shots, flyering and pushing their demos on people. They gigged alongside Sacramento's own Shortie and Leisure (who eventually became Middle Class Rut), Salmon from San Jose and Nuclear Rabbit from Novato. They got to open for local successes Far and Deftones. Recognition didn't come easily, but cockiness and confidence did.

"Once we started to jump out of the pond here in the small town, it was another challenge, because you're just nobody," remembers Jacoby. "We didn't give a fuck, man! We would just show up to these new places and peddle our demos right off the bat. We were like, 'What's up? You wanna fucking check out this new Papa Roach? We're the shit!'"

By 1997, bassist Will James had left the band and Tobin Esperance was in. His musician father produced debut album *Old Friends From Young Years*, a milestone for Papa Roach, who felt like they were creeping closer to making it as a professional band – even if it was funded by a loan from a drug dealer. The following year, they headlined a landmark, 700-capacity show at the Three Oaks Community Center with support from Snot, Incubus and Human Waste Project. "They were all LA bands, but they were starting to come up to NorCal, and they all had

> **"I HAD DIARRHOEA THE WHOLE FUCKING TIME"**
> JACOBY SHADDIX

record deals but we didn't," explains Jacoby. "That was an awesome moment for us, as an independent band in Vacaville. It was the moment when we felt like, 'Alright, I think it's really time for us to land this deal.'"

P-Roach shopped their music to majors and independents, from Interscope and Geffen to Century Media and Roadrunner. Nothing happened. Meanwhile, fans were turning up to gigs in droves. The band pushed on and targeted Los Angeles, refusing to pay to play at the Whisky or Roxy and doing free Monday nights at The Troubadour instead. There was another EP, *5 Tracks Deep*. And yet *another* one, *Let 'Em Know*. Their persistence paid off when they got a call from Jeffrey Weiss at Warner Bros, offering them a demo deal. Finally, it was happening.

Except… it wasn't. Papa Roach recorded five songs, but Jeffrey and Warner Bros parted ways. The label passed on the band, and they were back to square one. Luckily, ▶

there was another opportunity around the corner.

"I remember getting that call, and being so deflated and defeated. And then I was like, 'Fuck it, we're going to go on tour, we're going to promote this thing, and we're going to keep pushing.' We didn't have 'quit' in us. That wasn't part of our DNA," says Jacoby, getting riled up at the memory. "And we were mixing the demos, and this guy named Ron Handler from DreamWorks Records showed up and heard them, and fucking flipped out. Our lives changed at that point."

Papa Roach went into Hollywood's NRG Studios in the winter of 1999, with producer Jay Baumgardner, who had worked on debut albums for Coal Chamber, Spineshank and Dope. For Jacoby, who was a janitor at Travis Air Force Base Hospital, stripping waxed floors and incinerating boxes of body parts, the dream was finally coming true. So too for roofer Jerry, and 'Merry Maids' cleaners Dave and Tobin. Arriving for recording sessions, they found themselves treated like rock royalty.

"We were just po-po," remembers Jacoby. "So to be able to roll up in a studio and they're rolling out the red carpet for us, and they got the coffee hot for you, and the fruit plate, and the veggie tray, and if you wanna order food from the restaurant, you could do that? I was like, 'Oh my god, this is amazing.' But lo and behold, it was all the band's money I was spending! But we got a phat-ass deal, and it was budgeted for us to spend money, and send the runner to grab a big old handle of vodka, or a box of CDs so we could trip out on some new music. I had a great time spending the money for a minute."

The songs for *Infest* had been written, with a chunk already on their demos. All that remained was to commit the songs to tape with Jay. "I remember Ron telling Jay, 'Listen, I don't want you guys to over-produce this thing.' Because Ron's favourite band was Bad Brains. They just put out raw, visceral punk music. And he wanted our sound to be guitar, bass, drums and vocals. Let's capture the energy."

Though not entirely unexpected in a world that had given us Korn, the lyrical content was surprisingly heavy coming-of-age stuff for a band whose singer went by the not-exactly-serious name of Coby Dick. *Broken Home*, a rager with a turbo-charged screaming section, was about the fallout from Jacoby's parents' divorce. *Revenge*, a quirky rap-rock track, referenced abuse he had suffered at the hands of a babysitter. *Dead Cell*, with its thundering, low-end riffing, questioned how the Columbine killers could have carried out such evil crimes. And, of course, there was *Last Resort*, a song where Jacoby put himself in the shoes of a roommate who had attempted suicide. It was somehow catchy enough to become a club banger, and honest enough to become an anthem of hope.

By the time it came to recording, Jacoby had been singing the songs live for so long that he was almost numb to their meanings, and instead was hyper focused on trying to sound his absolute best. It was up to Jay to pull an emotional performance out of him.

> **"ONE CHICK PUT THE SHARPIE IN HER BUTT!"**
> JACOBY SHADDIX

"Jay was really helpful to me, to be able to tap into those emotions and let those feelings out," Jacoby says. "I remember breaking down a few times in the studio, because I was out of my comfort zone, underneath a microscope and exposing these vulnerable parts of myself in the music. It's an ebb and flow between the emotion, and then trying to be perfect. And I realised, fuck perfection. Really. You've just gotta be raw and fucking real."

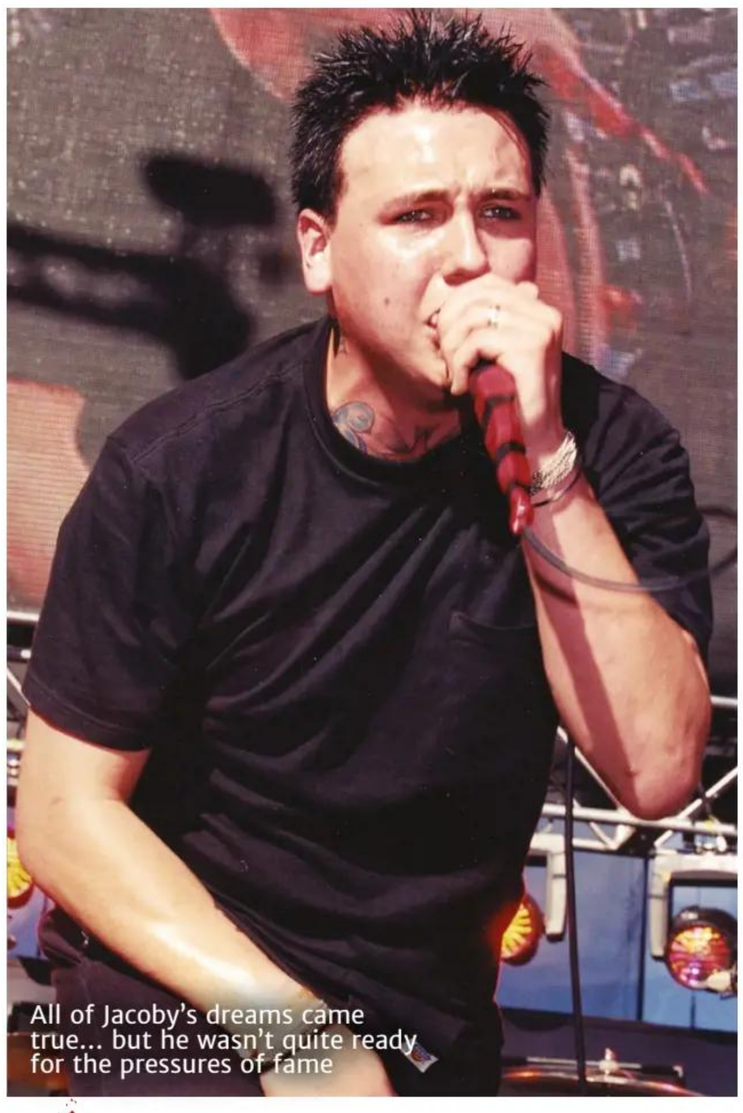
Infest was released in the US on April 25, 2000. Less than two months later, it had sold 500,000 copies, earning Gold status. Much of its success was down to airplay; Papa Roach had done a showcase gig at San Francisco's Maritime Hall back in February, attracting a huge amount of radio industry attention for *Last Resort*. The memorable video, featuring fans in their bedrooms, was in heavy rotation on music television. On the road, their audiences were increasing by the day.

"We were like, 'We're just gonna get in the van, and we're gonna tour, and we're gonna sell 100-150,000 records, 200,000 maybe',' remembers Jacoby. "All of a sudden, we're selling 150,000 records a week. And throughout the year… it was madness. We never came home. We just toured, and toured, and toured, and didn't stop touring."

Their first significant stint was on the legendary Warped Tour, starting on June 23 in Fresno, California. So chaotic was the crowd at the smallest stage that organiser Kevin Lyman immediately bumped them up. For Papa Roach, it was

Pout with clout, lads

Papa Roach (left to right): Jacoby Shaddix, Dave Buckner, Tobin Esperance, Jerry Horton



All of Jacoby's dreams came true... but he wasn't quite ready for the pressures of fame

also an education in "learning what rock'n'roll is all about", competing in the Beer Pong Olympics with Flogging Molly, Suicide Machines and Green Day as the punk rock summer camp rolled through state after state.

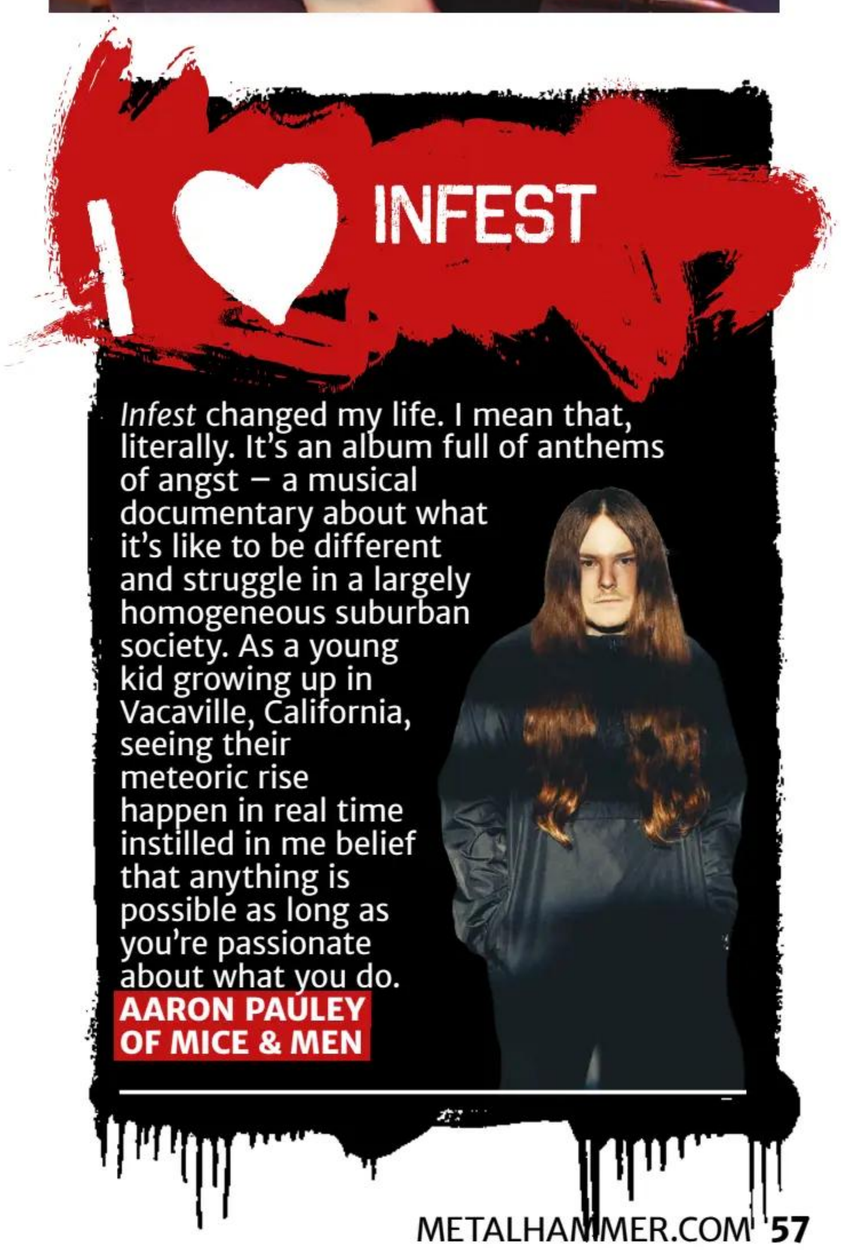
"I remember one night, everybody's partying and this chick comes around, and she's like [puts on girl's voice], 'Can I get the band's autographs?' And we're like, 'Alright,'" shrugs Jacoby. "We're doing the autograph deal, and then she was like, 'Now I wanna give you *my* autograph.' She pulls her skirt up, puts the Sharpie in her butt, squats down on a piece of paper and tries to write her name. That is etched into my memory until forever!"

At the tail end of Warped, prime time beckoned. Conan O'Brien in July; David Letterman in August; Jay Leno in October. Alongside Hollywood celebrities such as Kevin Spacey, Halle Berry and Mary Tyler Moore, Papa Roach were beamed into millions of households across the nation – not bad for a bunch of schoolkids who'd slogged it out in Onionsville for years. Metal had hit the mainstream, and by October they were on the Anger Management tour with Limp Bizkit and Eminem. They went out with Korn, and they did their own headliners. It was a whirlwind; everything they had ever wanted had come true. There were private jets, girls and all the trappings of celebrity – but Jacoby was not prepared for it. Two years of touring and promoting *Infest* hit like a ton of bricks.

"I didn't know how to handle fame," he confesses. "The drinking and the partying and nonsense that I was living just carried on to a point where it was starting to really take its toll on me. I was married, but I wasn't living like I was married. And the guilt and the shame from that really weighed heavy on me. And I thought, 'At the end of this whole fucking rollercoaster, I'm gonna go home and I'm gonna come back down to Earth', and I didn't."

Jacoby's now-well-documented battle with alcoholism continued, and it wasn't until the end of the touring cycle for 2002's *Lovehatetragedy* that he began his journey to sobriety. Today, he sighs with relief and gratitude as he tells us he hasn't picked up a drink for eight years. The making of *Infest* was a wild ride, but he's incredibly proud of how it's sustained the band and cut across generations.

"It's still one of my favourite records to listen to," he reveals. "And I think that honestly, that album is the reason we're still doing it. Having *Infest* in our catalogue affords us the opportunity to keep recording. In particular, *Last Resort*, *Between Angels And Insects* and *Broken Home*, they still stream like fucking crazy. Kids are discovering our band through *Last Resort*. What? Wow! It trips me out. It's definitely a timeless classic."



GETTY. AARON PAULEY: PRESS

THE STORY BEHIND

BRACKISH BY KITTIE

Nu metal was a baggy-panted boys' club – until Canadian teens Kittie stormed in with all guns blazing, and a debut single that was all about empowerment

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

METAL HAS LONG been a male-dominated space, but was arguably never as testosterone-driven as during the late 90s/early 00s nu metal goldrush. When Kittie released their debut album, *Spit*, in January 2000, it cut through the baggy pants-and-wallet-chains bravado like a sharp knife. Not only did it go harder and more aggressive than any nu metal album doing the rounds, with shades of death metal cutting through mountainous Korn-esque grooves, it also had thought-provoking and defiant songs like *Choke* and *Suck*, and sought to subvert gender expectations. And with *Brackish*, the band hit upon nu metal's only genuine anthem of empowerment.

Yet, when the four then-teenagers headed into EMAC Studios in Ontario to record *Spit* in the summer of 1999, they had no expectations. After playing a showcase at Canadian Music Week a few months earlier, Kittie had been signed by NG Records, a small, independent punk label kicking up dust out of NYC, on a four-album deal. But even then, the band cheerfully admit the magnitude of the situation was lost on them.

"I remember signing the deal, but it wasn't like the golden magical pen like, 'Hey, you guys got your big record deal'," says vocalist Morgan Lander. "It felt very low key. We were so young, we were just here for the ride. We thought this would be a fun summer project. We were going to press 5,000 copies of *Spit* and that was going to be it."

Given that all four members of the band were still in high school at the time, the *Spit* recording sessions, with Rage Against The Machine producer Garth Richardson, took place over nine days with the band doing their homework between takes. One song that would emerge from the sessions as particularly special was *Brackish*, which, with its jittery opening, brash, skittering electronic undercurrent and huge chorus, sounded worlds apart from anything else in the scene at the time. It would eventually become *Spit*'s first single and launch the band's career, but it almost never saw the light of day.

"I'd call that song an afterthought," says Morgan's sister and the band's drummer, Mercedes. "We weren't even going to record it for *Spit* at all."

"There is no video or audio recordings pre-recording of *Spit* that have *Brackish* in them in its current incarnation," adds Morgan. "The song we played before that was in a different key and the song structure was the same, but it was very basic. There was no melody, there was just a talking part during the verse and then the chorus there was nothing but was a scream before the [main riff]. We recorded it but then we weren't sure if we were going to put it on the album or leave it as an instrumental."

Frustrated that the song was still plateauing, the band asked their sound engineer to bring in a friend who could DJ to take things to the next level. "We paid him a case of beer to play us some cool jungle," laughs Mercedes. "The beats elevated [the song] to a place where the music stood out, but there still wasn't a vocal melody that matched that elevation."

Brackish's now-iconic chorus wouldn't come together until a few weeks later, when Morgan returned to the studio to lay down additional vocals. "I remember sitting on the floor in the vocal booth writing the lyrics down, it was right at the very tail-end, like, 'I have no idea what I'm going to say here. I'll just think of something.' The chorus then the screaming part underneath that, I wrote on the floor. We spent one day, and I banged it out."

Spit was originally released in November 1999 but was quickly pulled from the shelves and reissued when NG was bought out by Artemis Records at the end of the year. Around the same time, original bassist Tanya Candler left the band and was replaced by Talena Atfield, completing what many still believe is the 'classic' Kittie line-up along with lead guitarist Fallon Bowman. Together, the band filmed the video for *Brackish* during New York's CMJ music festival at a gig supporting Biohazard. "[Renowned music video director] Floria Sigismondi

The classic Kittie line-up (left to right): Morgan Lander, Talena Atfield, Mercedes Lander, Fallon Bowman

GETTY

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
2000

PERSONNEL:
Morgan Lander (vocals, guitar)
Fallon Bowman (guitar, vocals)
Tanya Candler (bass, vocals)
Mercedes Lander (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
31

wrote this incredible treatment with car crashes," remembers Morgan. "But the label didn't want to pay the price it would have cost, so we ended up doing a live video."

"We were being heavily played on K-Rock [Radio] and had started to build a following," adds Mercedes. "At that point, we actually had Kittie fans turning up to our shows, but the crowd was [mostly] industry people, which is hilarious because there's definitely some push mosh going on."

With *Brackish* on constant rotation on music video channels, things escalated quickly and in January 2000, Kittie were booked to support Slipknot on the Iowans' first headline tour.

"We left for the tour, and I just never went back to high school," says Morgan. "Those first 5,000 copies that we thought we were only going to seek for the entirety of our career flew off the shelves in a couple of days when *Spit* was released and then it started to sink in, the true size of what was to come."

That July, just a year after being signed, Kittie played the second stage at Ozzfest. Opening for headliners Soulfly, they were the youngest and only female band on the bill.

But rapid success also had a downside, and from the outset, the band found themselves exposed to the rampant misogyny of the 00s metal scene, and locked in a constant battle to be taken seriously. Reviews of *Spit* at the time of its release unanimously refer in astonishment to the fact the band were women. On a prominent US chat show a suggestion that they were "Britney Spears meets Slayer" was greeted by stony expressions and palpable annoyance.

"WE LEFT FOR THE TOUR, AND I JUST NEVER WENT BACK TO HIGH SCHOOL"

MORGAN LANDER

Meanwhile, during gigs, men would peek behind their amps, so certain they would find a bloke back there actually playing the guitars.

"Being a young person and having that around you really hurts. It sucks," says Morgan. "There were suggestions made [by the band's label], 'Maybe you can hire a songwriter to help you' and we were like, 'Fuck that.' We were so defiant looking back, maybe it was detrimental with our relationship with the label. We said no to many things – I'm pretty sure Calvin Klein asked us to do [an advert] and we were like, 'Fuck you, no way!' That would have been huge! We were so much in control of our career and direction, we didn't want anyone to question the validity of our songwriting skills or our abilities as musicians. No one could tell us what to do. We wanted to blaze our own trail and that is baked into *Brackish* and also the whole album."

Saying that, in early interviews Kittie's messages were mixed, engaging in gender politics while at the same time denying they were feminists. Rereading the lyrics to *Brackish*, it's easy to forget just how young its

Morgan fronting Kittie at Ozzfest in New Jersey on July 22, 2000

GETTY

"TO THIS DAY, PEOPLE TELL US OUR MUSIC IS EMPOWERING"

MORGAN LANDER

creators were when they were written (Morgan was 17 and Mercedes was just 15). Inspired by and written about a friend in a toxic relationship with a "gross" older man (*'You know he can't guide you / He's your fuckin' shoulder to lean on / Be strong'*), the song clearly comes from a place of youthful angst and heightened emotion, yet there's an underlying theme of independence and knowing your self-worth that still resonates all these years later.

"I don't think we thought far about that narrative and the wider meaning and how empowering the song actually is," considers Mercedes.

"I think a lot of our insecurities around feminism back in the early days of our career had a lot more to do with not understanding fully what being a feminist means," adds Morgan. "We were afraid of the negative connotation that can often come with it, from people who also don't understand what it means. We have always represented equality – even our existence challenged equality in the music industry. We fought for equal treatment, equal airtime and equal pay as women. We represented those things then, and still do now, even though we didn't realise that's what it meant to be a feminist."

On their second album, 2001's *Oracle*, Kittie veered away from nu metal, choosing instead to explore their more extreme influences, although they never again did reach the heady heights of their debut. And although the band's 2018 *Origins/Evolutions* 20th anniversary documentary brought Kittie back into the conversation, *Spit* is still something of a lost nu metal gem that deserves more props than it gets. Yet the album's true legacy is its message, which burns just as bright now as it did back then.

"To this day, people come to us and say, 'Your music is so empowering, I've never heard a woman scream like this'," agrees Morgan. "To me, that's the biggest testimony to the music – it's almost timeless. There's something magical about *Spit* in general. It has this raw power that transcends the box nu metal was in. It radiates out. You can feel our youth, our anger, all these emotions that made Kittie who we were back then."

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DANGER! HIGH VOLTAGE!

Loved by the fans, hated by some critics, Chicago's Disturbed were one of the most unlikely success stories of the whole nu metal era – a success that endures to this day

WORDS: PAUL TRAVERS

When Disturbed released their debut album *The Sickness* in March 2000 – three months into the new millennium – nu metal was in the process of going supernova. Korn and Limp Bizkit had both scored Number 1 albums in the US Billboard 200, with System Of A Down waiting in the wings. Woodstock '99 had been a chaotic multi-genre explosion built around a nu metal core and next-wavers Slipknot were starting to make their own unmistakeable imprint on the scene. Korn instigated the whole thing several years earlier, but with albums like Papa Roach's *Infest*, Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory* and Disturbed's debut all emerging within a few months of each other in 2000, there was still plenty of fuel for the nu metal fire.

Not that the band themselves were ever keen to embrace that tag. "The nu metal thing I never got because we never rap, we've never had a turntable',' frontman David Draiman told *Music Connection* some years later. "All of the elements that are parts of being a nu metal band were never part of what we did. But we came up at the same time as those guys were enjoying a tremendous amount of success so we got slapped with that label."

They're not alone in that, of course. Almost every act from that era – from scene pioneers Korn to more obvious outriders like Deftones – have tried to distance themselves from the genre at one point or another. With Disturbed, though, there was certainly an argument to be made. David's versatile vocal style (veering from baritone boom to scream to operatic wail) and the band's penchant for melody and classic metal bombast helped set them apart. There was ▶

GETTY/MICK HUDSON

Disturbed in 2002: (l-r) Steve 'Fuzz' Kmak, Dan Donegan, David Draiman, Mike Wengren

also, however, a certain riff-driven, syncopated groove that slotted perfectly into the musical landscape of the time.

But however they chose to view themselves, Disturbed would go on to be one of the most successful bands of the nu metal era, scoring a run of five consecutive Number 1 albums in the US and major international hits outside it. Despite a four-year hiatus from 2011, they would also prove to be one of the most resilient, maintaining the same core line-up apart from founder bassist Steve 'Fuzz' Kmak, who was replaced by John Moyer in 2004. They experienced a major resurgence in 2016 on the back of a cover of Simon & Garfunkel's *The Sound Of Silence*, which was a huge worldwide hit, and they remain one of the biggest rock and metal bands of any kind in the 21st Century.

And yet, for all the legions of fans and obvious love for the band, their detractors have been prominent – with the media, metal fans and even fellow artists often seeming to queue up for turns to take potshots at them.

"There's certain people the media embraces with open arms, because someone at that particular publication fell in love with that band," the singer told *Metal Hammer* in 2017 as he pondered the reason for all that overwhelmingly unwarranted hate. "And it's totally their style and totally their taste, and maybe we weren't. To me, there was a clear reason why. I became a popular face on the dartboard to throw darts at, and it worked for the publications who were building on this perception that I was one of these guys they loved to hate. 'Mad Davey' and all that bullshit."

Asked if the band's record sales had given him as sense of vindication, he added: "I try not to even bring that into focus, to be honest. I judge how we're doing, how I'm doing, by the fans, not the media. And look, I look forward to a day when we win them over, too. I'm not going to meet negativity with negativity. I've been at a very different place in my head for years now, people just haven't been willing to recognise it. I don't really give it much thought."

More recently, Disturbed have even openly embraced their Marmite status, knowingly titling their 2022 studio album, *Divisive* in reference to both an increasingly polarised culture war society and their own place in music fans' hearts.

"I think that we're the kind of band that people either really, really love or really, really hate. There's not a whole lot of in-between," David told *Revolver*. "I think that anything that's worth feeling passionate about brings extremes of polarity to it. The art that should disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed, right? I've definitely figured out how to come to peace with it. I like the fact that people are passionate one way or the other about what we do."

The genesis of what would come to be Disturbed grew out of the underground clubs in Chicago, Illinois. Guitarist Dan Donegan, drummer Mike Wengren and bassist Fuzz had all swirled around each others' basement bands before coalescing into an outfit named Brawl. "Mike was rehearsing with his band a couple of doors down form where I was with the band I was with and it didn't seem like they were getting it together or going too far. I called up Mike to tell him to quit your band," Dan recalled to *Cinemax*. With Fuzz also on board, they had the core of something in place but they still lacked a piece of the puzzle.

L. COHEN/GETTY

LEFT: J. SHEARER/GETTY

Limp Bizkit's John Otto, SOAD's Serj Tankian and David Draiman hold an impromptu nu metal summit

"I BECAME A FACE ON THE DARTBOARD TO THROW DARTS AT. 'MAD DAVEY' AND ALL THAT BULLSHIT"

DAVID DRAIMAN

The man who would fill that space had grown up with a deep love of music and a rebellious streak. David Draiman was expelled from three boarding schools and once blew up his principal's van. In his telling of the story, the principal had punched him and bloodied his nose, so David took the tyres off his van and rolled them into a lake in retaliation. "There was a big assembly the day after and he said that he suspected me but he couldn't prove anything. So next morning I got up early again, got a gas can full of gasoline and went and set his van on fire and it blew up," he recalled.

For all that, David was a high academic achiever who had the chance to pursue law but turned it down after experiencing a crisis of confidence – the only area of law that interested him was criminal defence and he said that he couldn't see himself defending people he knew were guilty. He went into the healthcare industry instead, where he worked as an administrator. Music was always there though, and the would-be vocalist also rolled through a succession of part-time bands. Then he saw an ad in a local paper that would end up changing his life.

The band that would soon become Disturbed had recently parted ways with original vocalist Erich Awalt and were desperately seeking a replacement. "We were forced to take an ad in the *Illinois Entertainer* and we added a bit making it sound like we were on the verge getting a record deal," Dan told *Cinemax*. "We wanted to deal with somebody who was professional and every knucklehead you could think of showed up for these," he laughed.

Things weren't looking particularly promising when David rocked up wearing what he described as "jeans shorts and sandals, total North Side Chicago stoner boy and these guys looked like Skid Row," but the guitarist recalls that the singer was the only one of dozens of auditionees who turned up ready to work on original material.

On the band's 2002 video album *M.O.L.*, Dan recalled, "He was banging out these melodies that were huge. And I'm sitting there, I'm playing my guitar and I'm grinning from ear to ear, trying not to give it away that I liked this guy. I was just like, 'There's something here.' For the first time really of being in this band, to me it felt like, okay, this has got a shot at something. It felt new."

The song they jammed on would go on to become *Want*, which would feature on the band's debut album. But even after such a successful introduction, the singer wasn't sure if he and the band would make a good fit.

He told *Artisan News*: "I went home to my roommate and I was telling him, 'Man, I don't know about this,' because I'd never sang to anything so aggressive before. I'm no Phil Anselmo, I don't know if I can pull this off. They were very Pantera-esque when I met them. And he sat me down and he said to me, 'Dude, whatever you may be thinking, I'm telling ▶

Ten thousand fists: Disturbed at the KROQ Almost Acoustic Christmas show in LA

you – I'm a fan of this genre, I'm a fan of this music and what I heard in that room, there's no doubt in my mind that you guys are going to get signed.' I still wasn't sure and I was scared to death cos I just didn't know how I would wrap my voice around it."

Luckily for future fans around the globe, Davey listened to his roomie and the band that we know and love/hate were born. On adopting the name Disturbed, he told *Livewire*: "It had been a name I have been contemplating for a band for years. It just seems to symbolise everything we were feeling at the time. The level of conformity that people are forced into was disturbing to us and we were just trying to push the envelope and the name just sorta made sense."

Even then, despite appearances to the contrary, it was not an overnight success story. *The Sickness* did not spring out of nowhere and the band knuckled down to some serious hard work.

"People think it was like this meteoric rise. It really wasn't," David Draiman told *Loudwire*. "We beat the hell out of ourselves for two or three years as a local band, our own self-promotional mega machine, every band member in a different venue of the city every time a rock show would come through town, passing out our promotional material – cassettes, stickers, t-shirts, whatever we could. [This was] in addition to playing strategically where we thought it made sense and in addition to building our following on the south side of Chicago. So there was a long period of time before that and a lot of struggle in a city that wasn't conducive to hard rock and heavy metal. Chicago was an alternative town. It was Smashing Pumpkins, Local H. It was not metal."

"PEOPLE THINK IT WAS THIS METEORIC RISE. IT WASN'T. WE BEAT THE HELL OUT OF OURSELVES"

DAVID DRAIMAN

It was the very rise of nu metal that pushed music industry interest away from alternative rock and towards heavier fare, as labels looked to get in on the act. They eventually signed with major label offshoot Giant and began working on their debut album with Chicago-based producer Johnny K.

Recalling the creation of *The Sickness*, David told *Heavy Consequence*: "It's broken into two different sessions in my head, because we did these demos for *The Sickness* that ended up becoming actual tracks on *The Sickness*. That was so experimental for me and formative and so very, very early on. Those demo versions of the songs didn't really change much from what we did on the album. Part of the reason is that those demo versions were done with the same producer, Johnny K, and we did them as best we could the first time."

The result was an album that did mix some of the binary riffing and downtuned lurch commonly associated with nu metal alongside Disturbed's more expansive bent and David's vocal gymnastics. Talking to *Live Nation* about the themes of *The Sickness*, the singer said: "The songs on the record are reflections of behaviour patterns that people exhibit on a day to day basis that we view to be negative or counterproductive or dangerous. Types of feelings and emotions and experiences that can touch everyone on a certain level. But the unifying theme of the record and really of the band is just a very strong struggle for individuality."

Part of Disturbed's quest for individuality included a stageshow involving a straitjacketed David being executed in an electric chair – a move straight from the Alice Cooper playbook. This certainly helped fuel the disdain that came from some quarters, but helped give the band a distinctive presence as they embarked on high profile tours with the

likes of Stone Temple Pilots, Marilyn Manson and successive Ozzfest jaunts in 2000 and 2001. Other aesthetic flourishes included a band symbol that combined images from Christianity, Judaism, Wicca/Paganism and Islam, and a grinning mascot known as The Guy, who has been rendered at various times by Todd McFarlane and David Finch – as well as recently making his comic strip debut in the series *Disturbed: Dark Messiah*.

The constant touring paid dividends and they had modest success with the singles *Stupify* and *Voices*. It was *Down With The Sickness* that really made an impact, however, becoming the band's signature song and a worldwide dancefloor anthem in the process.

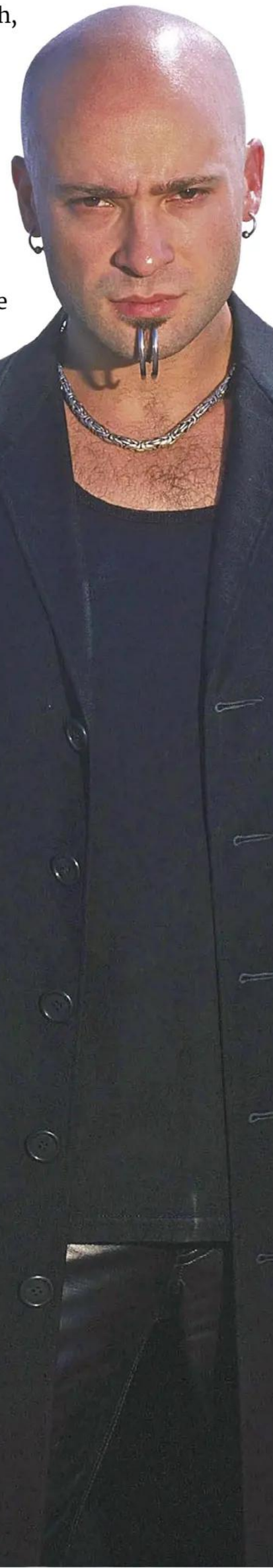
Regarding that vocal part in the intro, he told *Kerrang*!: "I've read ridiculous things, like I was walking near the zoo when I heard some animal make a noise. It was just improvisation really. That part where I do the first 'Oh-wa-ah-ah' was originally just a pause for dramatic effect but there was something so primal and tribal about that intro beat that Mikey came up with. The first time I tried it though, everybody stopped playing, looked at me and said, 'What are you doing?'"

He also stressed that the 'mommy rant' in the song was not a literal or autobiographical tale of abuse. "I took my licks and my beatings from my parents like just about every other kid from my generation, but my parents didn't abuse me and my mother certainly didn't," he explained. "It's meant to be an analogy and the mother in that section symbolises the mother culture of society. The child is the individual yearning and striving for their own identity while society tries to beat them into submission."

Speaking to *Loudwire*, David identified *Down With The Sickness* as a pivotal release for the band. "That's when things really took a significant, dramatic shift because that song resonated with so many people. It became such a worldwide phenomenon that really took things to the next level for us. Then things became slightly meteoric. But it wasn't until really the tail end of the cycle," he said.

When *Metal Hammer* spoke to the band ahead of their sell-out debut UK show at the London Astoria in 2001, they were still wide-eyed and taking it all in. "I'm constantly overwhelmed by it all," said Dan. "The opportunities we're getting now are just unbelievable, and it would be real easy to let them go to our heads. But at the same time, every time we meet one of our heroes it brings us back down to earth and makes us more determined to show the kind of determination they have. I mean, jeez, we've just been to Tommy Lee's house, hung out with Pantera, hung out with bands like Static-X and Godsmack – bands that a year ago we were saving up pennies to buy their albums. It's just insane!"

David Draiman auditions for the new *Matrix* movie



GETTY/JEFF KRAVITZ CUT OUT: MICK HUTSON/MICK HUTSON

And that was only the start of Disturbed's journey into the metal elite. While *The Sickness* laid the groundwork and would eventually be certified five times platinum, it peaked at Number 29 in the Billboard 200. Follow-up *Believe* debuted in the top spot in 2002 as did their next four albums – a feat only matched in metal by Metallica.

By 2003, nu metal's popularity was beginning to wane but its prime movers weathered the storm. Disturbed themselves embarked on yet another Ozzfest alongside Korn and headliner Ozzy Osbourne. With the benefit of hindsight, the presence on the bill of a rising metalcore outfit from Massachusetts named Killswitch Engage gave a glimpse of the next major heavy music trend, although it would still be another decade or so before metalcore really broke through to the mainstream.

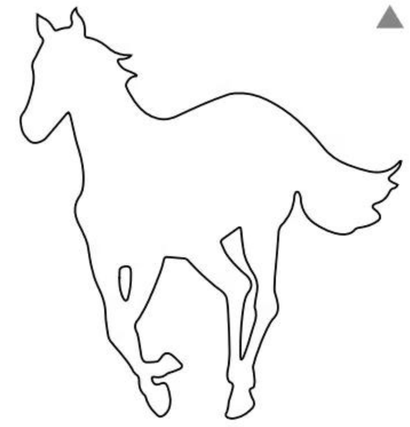
And Disturbed, it seemed, would be a band able to transcend genre and trends. Third album *Ten Thousand Fists* rung in the changes, being their first with bassist John Moyer and their last with producer Johnny K. It was on subsequent Number 1 albums *Indestructible* and *Asylum* that they really started to explore new musical avenues however, as well as giving freer rein to their hard rock and classic metal sensibilities. Even a lengthy hiatus couldn't derail them and when they returned with *Immortalized* in 2015 they again hit the Number 1 spot. Their cover of Simon & Garfunkel's *The Sound Of Silence* became a worldwide phenomenon. The music video has to date been viewed more than 890 million times while their live performance on talk show *Conan* has a more modest 136 million views but did prompt Paul Simon to reach out to offer his approval. Their last two albums – 2018's *Evolution* and 2022's *Divisive* – might not have kept that Number 1 streak running but both broke the Top 10 and today Disturbed remain a major force, able to hold arena audiences in the palm of their hands.

Following the release of *Divisive*, Dan said: "Whatever it takes, we've got to pull it together. We've always tried to take negative topics and spin them in a positive light. From touring around the world, we've seen the power of music as the universal language to bring everyone together from all walks of life. We can still play songs to unite people, and it's a powerful feeling."

Which, for a group commonly held up as one of the most polarising bands of the nu metal era, is a sentiment to live by.

BECK

a wild ride



Fuelled by cocaine, partying and a refusal to run with the nu metal pack, Deftones made an album like no other. This is the story of 2000's classic *White Pony*

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN

PRESS

An unbearable, sharp pain in the head. A horrible realisation. A torrent of blood. Deftones drummer Abe Cunningham, relieved at finally finishing *White Pony* after four months of nonstop recording and partying, had ripped off his clothes and jumped backwards onto his bed for the best sleep ever. Only, there was a double-ended knife sticking out of the fireplace he was using as a headboard. He'd stabbed it in there a few weeks earlier, just to be cool. Now, he'd impaled himself.

"It was *terrible*," he laughs today. "I was naked, and I just knew. 'Fuck! I just hit that fucking knife, that goddamn knife!' And I froze up. There was blood everywhere."

It was a fitting conclusion to the chaotic creative process for one of the greatest heavy albums of the 21st century. There had been bloodshed, in-fighting, videogame obsessions, cocaine-fuelled parties and unexpected celebrity guests, these multiple voices and experiences fuelling the explosion of originality heard across *White Pony*'s 11 tracks. It was an evolution of their sound, an anomaly in the metal scene, and confusing for their fanbase. No one had seen it coming.

Deftones had formed in Sacramento in the late 80s and signed to Madonna's label, Maverick, before releasing their debut album, *Adrenaline*, in 1995. It was a raw outburst of impulsive young energy, taking 90s alt-metal and mixing it with unhinged screams and blunt, abrasive riffs. Two years later, follow-up *Around The Fur* bumped up the quiet-loud-quiet dynamics and showcased more range and depth, propelling them to major festival stages and headline tours. In many people's eyes, they were a nu metal band. But for album number three, they had something else in mind. Rather than continuing steadily along the same path, or adopting the swagger-filled posturing of rising peers like Limp Bizkit, they pushed into a new universe of endless atmosphere, unearthly textures and abstract lyrics. Instead of putting out party metal, they made ambitious, timeless, mind-expanding music while partying.

"We came off a couple of records that were pretty successful, but I felt like we had a lot more to do," explains vocalist Chino Moreno. "A bigger voice, and really no rules."

Sharpie-dressed man: Chi Cheng backstage with fans

If you'd walked into Deftones' rehearsal studio in midsummer 1999, you would have seen a 10-foot halfpipe. You might have witnessed Chino doing kickflips, or guitarist Stephen Carpenter trying tricks on his bike. 'The Spot' was part workspace and part clubhouse, with Iron Maiden posters adorning the walls and a steady stream of friends coming and going, shooting the shit or pulling off shove-its between practice sessions. Skating was such a priority that the band even measured how much space they needed to get their road-cases through, and only allowed an extra inch on each side so they could make the ramp as big as possible.

"It was a hangout spot," smiles Abe. "All the while, we would just be testing out new music and drinking beer, and having the time of our lives."

"WE HAD MIMOSA MONDAYS, THEN MIMOSA TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND THURSDAYS"

CHINO MORENO

By this point, Deftones had already begun work on *White Pony*, and had even displayed the iconic graphic on their backdrop for that year's Ozzfest, their set sandwiched between Slayer and Rob Zombie. They'd also been trialling new song *Korea*, a low-down, grinding pit-crusher. At the tour's close, Stephen had moved to Los Angeles, while Chino, Abe and turntablist Frank Delgado stayed home in Sacramento, tinkering with ideas at The Spot. A few times a month, Stephen would make the six-hour drive to jam with them. When he was absent, Chino would pick up one of his bandmate's guitars and experiment with it – something that would later cause friction.

"I was very green to the guitar, but I just loved playing it," Chino explains in a soft drawl. "It's kind of weird that I'm the singer, because one of my least favourite things to do is to express myself through words, and guitar is a great way to express yourself without having to do that. Although, Stephen wasn't really too keen on it. He's always been the guitar player, so I was treading on his ground a little bit. He never really told me *not* to, but I could tell that he was like, 'Well, whatever. Let him get it out of his system, and then we'll move on.'"

That August, they went into The Plant in Sausalito, over the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. The historic studio had previously hosted the rock'n'roll likes of Stevie Wonder, Prince and Santana ("you try to rest your elbows on the studio wall and get a little bit of that mojo!" laughs Abe). While second album *Around The Fur* was completed in four months, they had been writing *White Pony* for ▶

Skater boys, ramping it up

GETTY

six before they even had enough songs to fill the record, and were only two-thirds done before they hit The Plant. "We went into the studio really, really ill-prepared, but I think that was the fun of it too," remembers Chino. "As much as we knew we wanted to make a record that was different, we wanted to capture a moment as opposed to going in and knocking it out. We really wanted to experience the 'record making'."

Experience it they did. The sleepy fishing city of Sausalito is known for its colourful houseboats, where the band lived together: Chino and Abe, Stephen and Frank, and bassist Chi Cheng in a nearby apartment with his wife and son. Every day they would ride their bikes to the studio, which boasted a lounge area with a kitchen, a huge television and couches, where they would smoke, drink and obsessively play the videogame *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. Far from getting the guitar out of his system, Chino was getting deeper into it. He'd sit in the kitchen with a digital recorder, developing his newfound skills.

"I had a little recording set-up in the kitchen, and we'd throw around ideas real quick, and then do a little bit of work, and we drank a lot of champagne," he smiles. "We'd have Mimosa Mondays, and then it turned into Mimosa Tuesdays and Wednesdays and Thursdays. We had a blast, seriously, hanging out and being young adults in a nice studio making a record that we wanted to make. We were living our best life at that time."

When they could tear themselves away from the halfpipe and *Tony Hawk's*, Deftones could make magic... and still do

despite only being in their mid-20s, most of Deftones had known each other for years, stretching back to their schooldays. They were as close as brothers, and would drive each other just as crazy as siblings could. And so it was with Chino and Stephen. The frontman, a fan of electronic music who was discovering new abilities. The guitarist, a Meshuggah fan used to taking the lead, who would walk out the studio and threaten to quit.

"Stephen and I... I don't think we were trying to outdo each other *for* competition, but we were trying to inspire each other in a way," Chino says diplomatically. "So I'd come up with an idea, and then I'd bring it to him, and he'd say, 'Oh, that's cool. How about this?' And then he'd come up with something, and would top that idea. And then I'd say, 'OK, well what about this?' And top that. Not as a competition, but pushing each other to see how far we can go. And I think that really benefited the record, because there was no way you were going to have this linear-sounding thing, when each of us were trying to see how far we could push each other. Our relationship started to be strained a little bit at that point, but musically I think we prospered."

Abe is more direct. "These guys would just scream!" he laughs. "Chi, too. They would scream like fucking crazy. So it was tense, but the funny thing was, Chino just really enjoyed playing guitar. He was not the best guitarist at all, but he was learning, and learning in front of the world. He wasn't trying to get to Stephen, but Stephen was not happy."

"THESE GUYS WOULD JUST SCREAM LIKE FUCKING CRAZY"
ABE CUNNINGHAM

Their producer, Terry Date, agrees there were "turf wars", while he argued about studio time lost to the band's addiction to *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*. "Terry would come in furious," remembers Abe. "His glasses would be all steamed up, and he'd be like, 'Goddamnit, get in there!'"

Yet when Deftones focused, they made some amazing breakthroughs. Terry, who had helmed both their records, initially suggested they consider other producers, in case they wanted a fresh perspective on their music. But after meeting with the likes of Rick Rubin and Talking Heads keyboardist/guitarist Jerry Harrison, the band had opted for him again. They were comfortable with him, he knew how to get the best from them – and besides, there was no shortage of ideas flying around.

Chino and Stephen leaned into their push-pull dynamic to write *Change (In The House Of Flies)*, *White Pony*'s first single and a career-defining song. Opening with a mournful riff, eerie noises and breathy vocals, it erupted into a climactic chorus with an edge of danger, like staring directly into a beautiful, exploding sun.

"I knew that it was one of the best songs on the record," reveals Chino. "I could hear it, and one of the important things about it was that Stephen and I wrote it together; we were playing off each other. So it was very organic, and everybody is represented. Frank's part in that song is just as important as the

drum beat – that wailing sound that you hear in the background of the verses. It adds this certain cryptic quality to the song that always tugged at you in this weird way."

Turntablist Frank Delgado had met Deftones back at the at the beginning of their career, when he was DJ'ing at the Cattle Club in their hometown of Sacramento. Although he'd contributed to some songs and toured on *Around The Fur*, he had only just been appointed an official member, and his imaginative, spacey soundscapes would be crucial in shaping *White Pony*.

Frank would hear the band coming up with ideas, dig through records to find something that fit with the key, and figure out a way to use a sample. Sometimes, necessity proved to be the mother of invention: as he couldn't afford a synthesiser, he'd manipulate a sample to sound like one.

"On *Change...*, it's a short sample, but I extended it with some guitar pedals that Stephen gave me," he explains. "And then I would play it with the pitch on the turntable to get notes and melodies. So it sounds like a synthesiser, but it's not."

It was the same with *Teenager*. As Frank didn't have a drum machine, they used lo-fi hip hop beats from his childhood friend, DJ Crook. It was

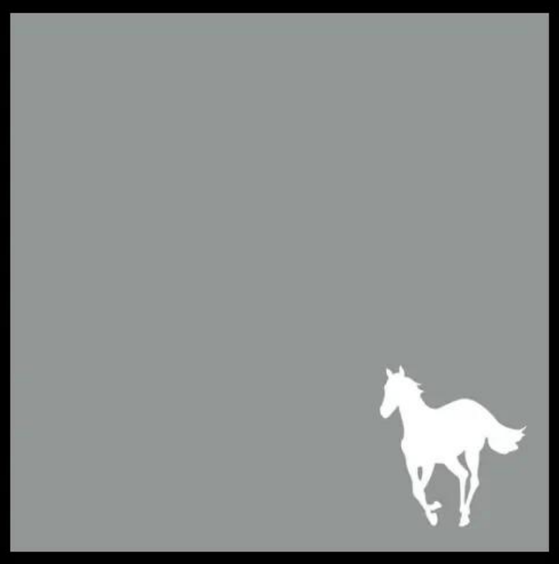
Chino in San Jose, October 2000, on the Back To School tour

common for nu metal bands to have DJs, but Frank was doing more than tokenistic scratching. Like the hip hop he loved, and the DIY skateboarding culture the band grew up in, he was borrowing sounds from across the musical spectrum and making them Deftones' own.

"We loved everything and anything, so we would grab and pull things," says Frank. "It's kind of the same way they brought me into their mix; it wasn't a preconceived notion that they needed a DJ, they just saw there was ▶

PRESS. GETTY.

what does white pony mean?



We got the answer, straight(ish) from the horse's mouth

IS THE TITLE A REFERENCE TO DRUGS?
Chino: "Honestly, it didn't start as a drug reference. That's not what it was, that's what people *took* from it or whatever. I always found it very ambiguous. I found more excitement in people trying to understand what it was, and then come in with their own ideas. And then I would just go 'Hmmmmm yeah, yeah OK, maybe...' and never confirm anything. I enjoy the ambiguity of it. If anything, that's how I'd always perceived it."

BUT... WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY MEAN?
Chino: "There's a song that actually is a drug song, called *White Horse* [released in 1983 by Danish duo Laid Back]. There's always these tales about death coming on a pale white horse. I don't know, we just kind of ran with it, not really knowing exactly where it was going to go, but it was kind of neat to have this very raw, un-thought-out idea to riff off of."

WHERE DID YOU GET THE IDEA IN THE FIRST PLACE?
Chino: "It's a piece of clip art. Like, free clip art. Like what an emoji would be back then – a little one-line drawing. I don't know why I picked it out. I thought it was very ambiguous. I liked the name, 'White Pony'."

something there that was working, that was really cool, and pulled it into their world."

"There were no boundaries of what kind of record we were supposed to make," states Chino. "As a band, we weren't limiting ourselves to, 'We're this four-piece band who makes aggressive rock music.' We were able to expand."

The band's record deal was what Abe refers to as a "twofer": no matter what the sales of the first album, they were guaranteed a second. Having crossed that threshold with success, they felt liberated. "We had everything to prove but yet nothing at all," says Abe. "We only had to prove it to ourselves."

Deftones had gone to Hollywood when they finished *Around The Fur*, but they had never *lived* in Hollywood. It was about to become their new playground. Relocating to Larrabee Sound Studios for mixing, they took up residence in a mansion Abe says was previously owned by Chuck Berry. "It had these crazy little mini doors and *Scooby-Doo* book-shelves, and it was haunted as hell," he insists. This is where he would have the knife incident.

The mansion, off Sunset Strip, was also where they'd have friends over to rage all night. If they weren't at home, they were running riot between the bright streets and dark alleyways of Hollywood. Deftones already had a reputation; after all, the cover photo of *Around The Fur* was a bikini-clad woman taken at one of their hot-tub parties.

"Some nights were super-wild," confesses Chino. "I think it just added to what *White Pony* was. There's some dark themes on there, certainly hinting at that kind of stuff, and I wouldn't say it's a party record by any means, but I think it has… a little sleazy vibe. And I feel like that's how we were living. It kind of crawled its way into the music."

Now 20 years older and living in different times, they're unsurprisingly reluctant to disclose details of any X-rated activities. Did they have adult actresses over? Were they going to strip clubs? "You don't need me to tell you – you know *exactly* what happened," Abe grins. "We were fucking young, having a fucking blast, doing a bunch of blow, drinking, partying. Lots of cocaine, tons of it. But it was not everyone in the band."

As with Sausalito, they also put in the graft, continuing their "grab and pull" approach with a string of unexpected guest vocalists. Rodleen Getsic, whose spinetingling screams cleave *Knife Prty*, was a singer Chino met while playing pool in the studio's lounge. Late Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland, who had just served time for violating probation following a conviction for heroin possession, ended up on *Rx Queen* after a call from Deftones' A&R man, Guy Oseary.

"That was kind of a trip," recalls Chino. "He wanted Scott to get out of jail, and have something to do that would take him away from whatever he was doing that landed him in jail. I went to his studio in the Valley, and we were listening to *Rx Queen*, and he had a little harmony idea so he picked up the mic. It's a total Weiland harmony, something I wouldn't think to write."

"A SLEAZY VIBE CRAWLED INTO THE MUSIC"

CHINO MORENO

The most high-profile turn came from Tool's Maynard James Keenan, who appeared on the windswept, nocturnal *Passenger*. He had been there when Deftones wrote the song in '99, prior to demoing. The day before vocals were due to be recorded, Chino invited him to collaborate.

"We sat next to each other in front of the control board, and put the music on. It was really cool the way we wrote it – we shared a notebook, and he wrote a line, and I'd write a line, and then I'd hand it back to him to write a line, and he'd hand it back to me. So the way you hear the song on the record is pretty genuine to the way we wrote it, where we trade lines. We didn't really have an idea for what we were making a song about, we just started riffing off each other," says Chino, sounding incredulous. "Even to this day, I don't think I've worked that way with anybody. I was super-stoked with it."

Chino disliked writing lyrics so much that *Adrenaline* is riddled with garbled vocalisations. Immersing himself in instrumental music, he sought to distance himself from the trends of heavy music, turning instead to abstract phrases. *White Pony* lurched between vertiginous stories and erotic scenarios, glinting with deathly metaphors for love and power, like a string of woozy fever dreams that left shadows on the brain.

"Music with words was a drag to me," Chino explains. "Coming out of what grunge was, and it was 'pity life, life sucks, this and that'. And then nu metal, which was sort of the same complaining about how lame the world is. I just didn't wanna hear that shit anymore."

Frank Delgado, Chino Moreno, Abe Cunningham, Chi Cheng and Stephen Carpenter at Rock In Rio II, Brazil

a date with destiny

White Pony's producer, Terry Date, remembers how they created such an influential record

White Pony was released on June 20, 2000 – Chino Moreno's 27th birthday. Anticipation for the record was such that Deftones appeared on *David Letterman* that night, performing *Change (In The House Of Flies)*. The band loved the song so much, they had insisted it should be the first single, even though their record label didn't think it was aggressive enough to lead the album campaign. And while it would turn out to be a commercially successful hit, that hesitation was understandable; in a climate where Limp Bizkit and Papa Roach were some of the buzziest bands around, *White Pony* was a curveball for fans, who accused Deftones of turning their back on heaviness.

"That record wasn't loved right away," cautions Chino. "As much as Deftones fans love it now, they didn't. Because we were known more as a 'nu metal' band. They were trying to box us into that. *White Pony* separated ourselves from that genre that was at its peak, so I still felt like we were in an uphill battle to earn our place."

The record sold decently, reaching Gold status (500,000 copies) within three months, but Maverick thought it could do better. Claiming there wasn't an obvious second single, they suggested taking the woozy chorus ▶

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YOU'D ALREADY WORKED WITH DEFTONES ON *ADRENALINE* AND *AROUND THE FUR*. HOW HAD YOU SEEN THEM GROW?
"They were really excited in the beginning, because they said that they now had a 'brand name producer'. Ha ha ha! I felt like a box of cereal or something! But it's alright, it was good. As was typical with a lot of younger bands that I worked with, the first record was all energy, very little thought. The second record, more thought was put into it, they still had the energy – to *this day* they still have the energy, so they never lost that. But the energy versus thought ratio shifted a little bit more toward thought, and then on *White Pony*, even more so."

WHY DID YOU SUGGEST DEFTONES MIGHT WANT TO WORK WITH A DIFFERENT PRODUCER FOR *WHITE PONY*?
"When I had worked with Chris Cornell and Soundgarden, we always had these conversations where he felt that if a band worked with the same person *too* long, they may not have been able to see some new things or get some new ideas. And so as much as I would have selfishly wanted to work with them forever, I felt like it would have been really good for them to branch out. I can't remember if it was *White Pony* or the self-titled one [Terry also produced their fourth record, released in 2003]."

HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING BACK FOR ALBUM NUMBER THREE? THEY JOKED THAT THEY ALWAYS TRIED TO MAKE YOU QUIT!
"That's never changed from day one! Matter of fact, a little story from the first record, *Adrenaline*. Back then they were really young and they had a lot of chains coming out of their pockets, and they made a lot of noise when they moved around. Not just their mouths, but that part too! And I was trying to mix the record, and they were making all kinds of noise, so I had to take some tape and make a circle behind me that was early social distancing, I guess. But it was six feet behind me, and they were not allowed to cross that line into my zone. So of course, they'd stand right on the line the whole time and rattle their chains. I never let them know that I was irritated, just because I couldn't give them that satisfaction!"

DID YOU KNOW THEY WERE GOING TO CHANGE DIRECTION ON *WHITE PONY*?
"No. I don't try to get in the way of what their creative impulses are. My job I feel is just to focus on where they wanna go, and if they're going down a rabbit hole that I think is wrong, then I'll tell 'em. But they could put out an album of handclaps and I'd be happy to be there, you know, if that's what they felt like doing."

HOW DID FRANK CHANGE THE DYNAMIC?
"The textures that Frank brought, to me added a whole lot. There was a lot of atmospheric stuff that wasn't in the first two records as much, definitely not the first record. Instead of just bludgeoning the whole time, we were able to have more dynamics and open areas."

CHINO AND STEPHEN CLASHED IN THE STUDIO. WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER OF THAT?
"They were brothers fighting. They were having fun! And also, getting back to that third record thing, there are a lot of outside things pulling people – family stuff, business stuff – and that all added to whatever tension was going on. But I really feel like that tension is what made that record special. That raw emotion, that was kind of hidden, was coming out on the surface there."

DO YOU REMEMBER SOME OF THE BAND DOING COCAINE?
"No, because they hid it from me really, really well. I was like dad. I didn't see anything going on, it never affected *how* they worked at all. I caught 'em a few other times on a few other records, but you know, that was their deal."

DID IT FEEL LIKE DEFTONES WERE DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT TO ALL THE NU METAL BANDS?
"I think Deftones kind of unfairly get lumped into 90s nu metal, because Deftones aren't like Korn, and they're not like Limp Bizkit. They're similar audiences, but when your influences are Meshuggah, and Fiona Apple, and PJ Harvey, it's going to be different."

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT *WHITE PONY* TODAY?
"It was a very special record to me, because first of all my daughters were very young at the time. So, my kids grew up with them pretty much, they had little nicknames for all of 'em. Plus, The Plant was a really special place. I recorded a Mother Love Bone record at that same studio. It's always bittersweet listening to all those first four records, because we miss the big guy [he points to a photo of late bassist Chi Cheng]. But anyway, we want to make a record that is valid in 20 years. We want it to last. And so we accomplished I think what I wanted to accomplish out of that, which is for these guys to have a record that people still enjoy down the road."

The Elite: Deftones at the 43rd annual Grammy Awards on February 21, 2001

from *Pink Maggit* and stretching it into something more up-tempo and marketable. The result was *Back To School (Mini Maggit)*, accompanied by a now-iconic video of Chino rapping while stomping over desks and skating down hallways. *White Pony* was re-released with *Back To School* as its first track.

"They asked a few times, and then the straw that broke the camel's back was when I got a phone call from Guy Oseary and he said, 'I just got off the phone with Paul Hunter', who at the time was a *huge* video director. He had done Britney Spears, Eminem videos. And budgets back then were one million dollars starting. They were super-expensive. But he said, 'You guys do this, we'll pay for it, blah blah, this and that.' And at that point I was like, 'Alright, whatever, we'll do it'," says Chino. "In retrospect, do I regret it? No, not really. It is what it is. But do I prefer the record the way it was *before* that song was on it? Yeah."

"We were pissed!" exclaims Abe. "We were fucking pissed. How dare you make us change this shit, and try to fit into what's going on right now?"

Acclaim from the establishment came with a Best Metal Performance Grammy for *Elite*, but Deftones were still trying to navigate their way through a nu metal minefield. The fivesome turned down significant high-profile tours with the likes of Korn, Papa Roach and Limp Bizkit in a deliberate effort to distance themselves from a scene they didn't see a future in, but they were well aware of how this made them look – especially in the eyes of the musicians they considered friends.

"THERE WAS LOTS OF COCAINE. TONS OF IT"

ABE CUNNINGHAM

"I think they would get bummed, kind of like we were being dicks 'cause we didn't wanna tour with any of them," admits Chino. "But now in retrospect, I feel like it was probably one of the most important decisions we had to make. Now, if I see an article in a magazine about nu metal, I'll scan through it to see if we're in there. If we're *not*, I get so stoked, like, 'Wow, we dodged that bullet!'"

Twenty years on, *White Pony* is a timeless classic that transcends the boundaries of metal's tribal subgenres. Artistically, it's extraordinary – diverse influences crash in harsh maelstroms or coalesce in melodic ambience, the songs smoothly flowing into each other. Commercially, it has continued to sell steadily, and has shifted three million copies worldwide. "We didn't know if people would like *White Pony*, we just did it anyways. And for that reason, I'm really proud of it," Chino concludes. "But I also think that's why it's still successful, because we followed our instincts."

"I'm proud of that little pony, that's now… an older horse!" adds Abe. "It's out in pastures, running around free."

Making *White Pony*, Deftones were determined not to be saddled with the nu metal tag

GETTY: PRESS/JEN McCORD.

limpbizkit VS THE WORLD

Chocolate Starfish... would give nu metal's obnoxious second generation its crowning achievement. It would also see Limp Bizkit become rock's new public enemy number one

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE

DALLE/IDOLS/PHOTOSHOT

If Korn's self-titled 1994 debut represented nu metal at its rawest, purest roots, then surely no album better personified its rise to obnoxious, all-conquering glory than *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water*. Limp Bizkit's loud, lairy and ludicrously titled third record ushered in the moment where alternative music's relationship with the mainstream reached critical mass. It was the album that confirmed a once unthinkable dynamic: metal was, even if only for a moment, the biggest genre in the world. True, *Hybrid Theory* may have arrived a mere week later to take things even further, but that album took a little while longer to become the unstoppable, history-making juggernaut we now recognise it as. *Chocolate Starfish...*, meanwhile, was an instant phenomenon; shifting more than a million copies *in a week*, it became the fastest-selling rock album of all time and completed Limp Bizkit's evolution from metal's outsider frat boys into legitimate pop culture icons.

"I never thought Limp Bizkit was gonna be as large as it was," admits guitarist Wes Borland today down a phone line from his home in Detroit. "Then the record sold a million in the first week. It was just ridiculous. There was a point in which things got so big that I don't remember getting them getting bigger."

Things were already getting pretty damn big for Limp Bizkit by the turn of the millennium. In an era where metal's 90s generation had all but prised the baton from its elder statesmen, Bizkit looked set to be the scene's most successful, but controversial, graduates. A stint supporting Korn followed by abrasive debut album *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* in 1997 would see them become one of the most talked-about bands in rock. Their cocksure mix of brawling hip hop and kaiju-sized riffs was drawing in a wide array of fans, but it also made them an instant target for metal's more sneery quarters – accusations that their music and image was opening our world up for invasion by jocks and posers ran riot.

It didn't matter: when *Significant Other* landed in 1999, it peaked at No.1 in the States and made the Top 10 in the UK, the likes of *Break Stuff* and *Nookie* providing metal's biggest breakout anthems for a generation. It was also a record that saw them continue to court controversy: Bizkit's set at the disastrous Woodstock '99 was scapegoated for the widespread violence that marred the festival.

Inking It Up: Fred tattooing Wes

The sales, however, kept coming in, and the quintet – Wes, becapped frontman Fred Durst, bassist Sam Rivers, drummer John Otto and DJ Lethal – now had enough momentum to become rock's most significant band in a decade. And so, wanting to bottle that lightning, and after only half a year of promotion for *Significant Other*, the band knuckled down for album number three.

"We had this huge record to follow up," recalls Wes. "There was pressure, but we didn't feel insecure or like we couldn't follow it. We felt really confident going in, and I knew what I wanted to do. I knew it was gonna be different from *Significant Other* – and better."

"HOW DID PEOPLE NOT REALISE WE WEREN'T BEING SERIOUS?"

FRED DURST

After a brief and unsuccessful stint working with Rick Rubin, Bizkit settled in at LA's Larrabee Studios with *Significant Other* producer Terry Date, looking to build upon the band's increasing knack for nailing big, fuck-off, modern metal bangers.

"It was really good," Wes remembers. "We were all [recording] in the same room and we wrote songs and recorded them as we went. I don't even remember how many weeks we recorded for, but I just remember there was one day that

We smell a sitcoooooom!

came where we were listening to everything we had, and Fred goes, 'I think we're done.'"

The band came out of the studio with an album that'd take them further than even they could have possibly imagined. Landing at No.1 on both sides of the Atlantic after its release in October 2000, *Chocolate Starfish...* hit a resounding bullseye, stacked with so many big songs that Bizkit were able to release five of them as singles and still hold back tracks that'd become future setlist staples. *Rollin', My Generation, Take A Look Around, My Way, Hot Dog, Livin' It Up, Full Nelson*... that that list reads like a greatest hits set by itself tells you all you need to know about the kind of firepower that *Chocolate Starfish...* was packing.

Limp Bizkit at the Grammys in 2000 (left to right): John Otto, Sam Rivers, DJ Lethal, Fred Durst, Wes Borland

It was an album that saw Bizkit become a part of the very fabric of mainstream culture. *Take A Look Around* would become the standout anthem from Tom Cruise's blockbuster sequel Mission: Impossible 2 (not bad given that Metallica also wrote a song for the soundtrack), while *Rollin'*, a UK No.1 single, would be adopted by legendary wrestler The Undertaker as an entrance theme and nab a cameo from Hollywood A-lister and *Meet The Parents* star Ben Stiller in its video. The video for *Rollin'* would also feature Fred flanked by female dancers in matching red caps and even a segment filmed on top of New York's World Trade Center – the ultimate send-up of the excesses of music culture, and a send-up of Bizkit themselves. Even if many didn't get the joke.

"We started to poke fun at what people thought we were," Fred told Metal Hammer in 2014. "That's why we made the *Rollin'* video. There were red caps everywhere, and look at Wes at the beginning of the video with his grills in! How the hell did people not realise we weren't being serious? We thought it was hilarious."

Indeed, while Bizkit were attracting fans in their millions, they were also continuing their hot streak of pissing people off all over the place. *Hot Dog*'s goading of Nine Inch Nails mainman Trent Reznor helped to add fresh fuel on an ongoing feud between the two bands, while a long-rumoured issue between Bizkit and Rage Against The Machine came to a bizarre head at the 2000 MTV Video Music Awards. As Fred, Wes and the rest of the band stepped up to receive their award for Best Rock Video, Rage bassist Tim Commerford (whose band had also been nominated), scaled part of the set and started shaking it around. He'd end up spending a night in jail for his troubles, later putting his actions down to his "own personal politics".

"I've heard rumours from different people," muses Wes now. "That Rage were like, 'Limp Bizkit is like Rage Against The Machine but they bring the 'party' instead of making people think!' That's what I've heard annoyed Tim."

Whatever the reasoning, it didn't do much to dispel the belief that Bizkit weren't much loved in the rock industry. In reaping their unprecedented success, they had become metal's ultimate outsiders: a band the mainstream didn't fully understand and one their own peers straight-up hated. To their fans, though, they were the most important band of their era: a gateway into metal, sure, but also a cross-culture anomaly. As much as they were dividing fans from within the metal scene itself, they were also uniting music lovers from across much deeper divides.

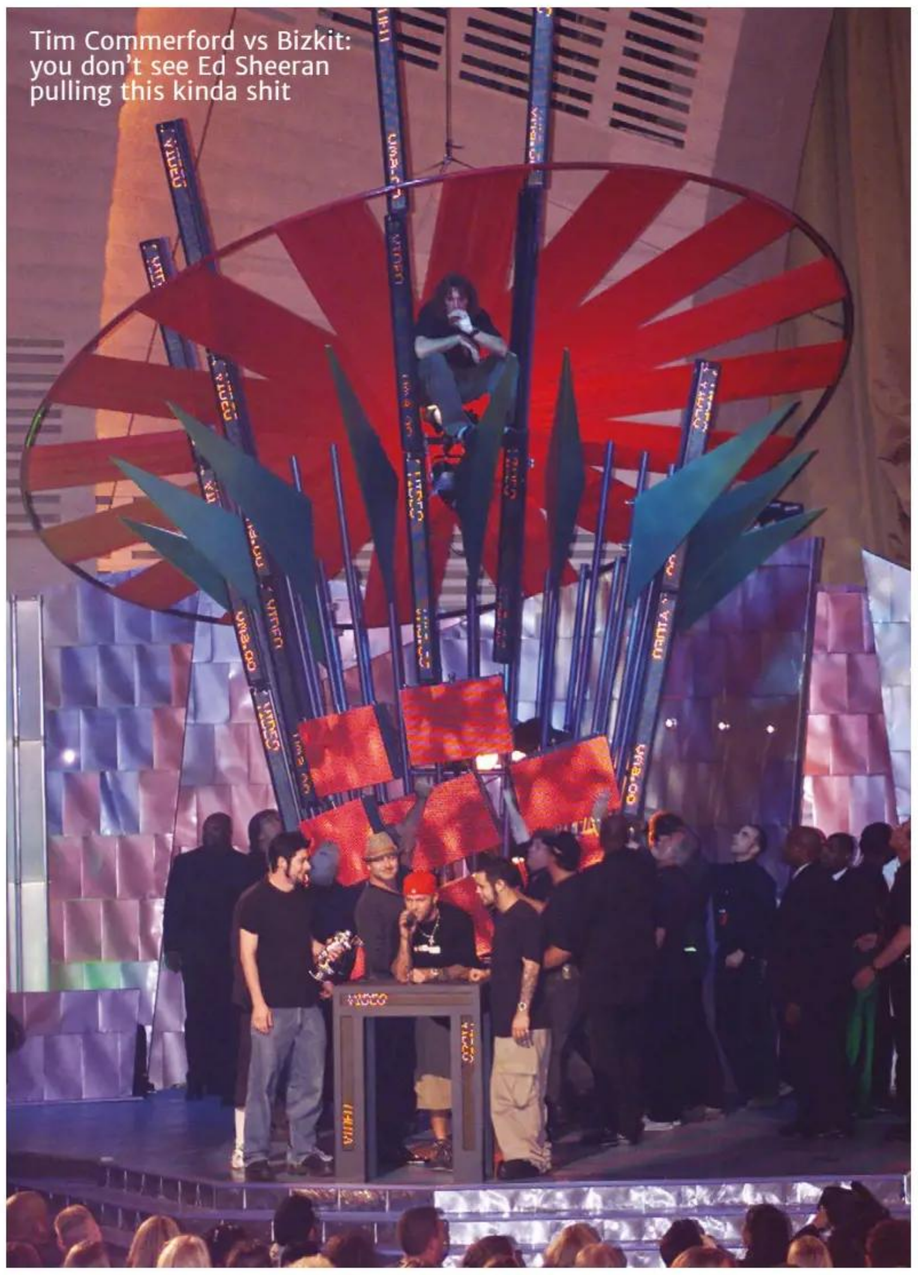
"People were either high on the emotion of things being fresh and exciting in terms of new sounds and urban music coming into heavy music, or they were rebelling against that," suggested Fred. "People who liked different kinds of music got what they wanted for the first time. It was that one moment in time when the planets▶

GETTY

Fred Durst didn't take kindly to being public enemy number one

GETTY

The uniform of a generation


Tim Commerford vs Bizkit: you don't see Ed Sheeran pulling this kinda shit

lined up and we all got to share that moment together. It meant something to a big group of people who had never been heard before. It was special."

"We weren't accepted by rock any more, we weren't accepted by pop," adds Wes now. "[But] we were accepted by the hip hop world because the hip hop world got the hip hop side of us, but had never really experienced rock like that before. Without tooting our own horn, we're the band that does that best: that tries to represent both sides equally, rather than being a rock band that has some rap, or a hip hop band that has some heavy guitar. I think we're pretty evenly split down the middle."

Their choice of tourmates would echo such statements. Having spent time on the road with Cypress Hill earlier in the year, Bizkit saw out 2000 on the aptly titled Anger Management Tour with rap's newest superstar, Eminem. Once they'd carried the momentum of *Chocolate Starfish...* into 2001, things were only getting bigger and crazier.

"Everything just seemed excessive," remembers Wes. "I think the last tour we did on that record cycle, we had our own stage built, there was this giant robot... [the label] told us, 'If you have this production, none of you are gonna make a penny on this tour.' And we went, 'That's fine!' We did all this touring that didn't make any money because our production was so huge. It was like we just broke even. It was ridiculous."

As the shows got more extravagant and Bizkit's star burned brighter, so too did the pressure increase on its two leading lights. On the face of it, Fred seemed to revel in being music's new antagoniser-in-chief, but the truth was slightly different.

"I felt like I was a target, public enemy number one," he admitted. "I didn't know how to deal with it. Wherever you went, it felt like eyes were on you and like your life isn't your own anymore. You sort of think, 'Fuck all these people'. If people had to find out every last detail of your life and what you jerk off to at night, people might hate you too."

Wes, meanwhile, was also struggling. His colourful outfits and enigmatic presence may have made him a perfect nu metal poster boy, but they also represented an eclectic artist who was finding being the centre of attention deeply uncomfortable.

"In the space of six years, I went from a nobody, no one knowing who I was and having complete anonymity, to having to move to Los Angeles because I had 20 kids on the doorstep of my house in Florida looking in my windows," he sighs. "I couldn't go to the grocery store. I didn't like that. It was embarrassing to me. I also was letting press get to me, letting my peers get to me, people talking shit, saying 'Limp Bizkit is the McDonald's of rock bands', stuff like that. I started to feel like a novelty."

"WE HAD OUR OWN STAGE. THERE WAS A GIANT ROBOT. IT WAS RIDICULOUS"

WES BORLAND

By the end of 2001, it had all become too much. Wes left the band that October, and while he'd eventually return, Bizkit would never scale the insane commercial heights of the *Chocolate Starfish...* era again. That album was a moment in time that no one saw coming, and one that left a huge impact on the metal scene and beyond. After nearly a decade of ups and downs, a richly received European tour with a rejuvenated Wes in the summer of '09 would help reincarnate Bizkit as metal's party band of choice. It's a status they've retained to this day, no longer rock's whipping boys, nor its anti-heroes – just a kickass band with a back catalogue of all-time anthems. Most of which still remain carved from a certain loud, lairy and ludicrously titled third album.

"I just think it took a lot of people time to get over how annoyingly in everyone's face we were for that period," suggests Wes. "When you're that overexposed, where no one can get away from you and you're like, 'Uh, I'm so sick of seeing this person all the time.' Now, people can enjoy the band for what it is. I love being in Limp Bizkit so much now. I love every show, I love going on tour, I love everybody in the band. But it took all these years for me to look back on that and go, 'God, I love this, and I *love* playing those songs.'"

THE STORY BEHIND BODIES BY DROWNING POOL

It was one of the great moshpit anthems of the early 00s, yet the New Orleans metallers' biggest hit was overshadowed by tragedy

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

DROWNING POOL'S *BODIES* just might be *the* ultimate turn-of-the-millennium metal club anthem. Even more than 20 years after its release, the song maintains a near-ubiquitous presence in metal clubs, bars and gig playlists around the planet. An unabashed love letter to mosher culture, the song propelled Drowing Pool to stardom during the golden age of nu metal, proof positive that any new band could fly from obscurity to stardom with a massive riff and a pit-starting chorus. Except Drowning Pool never really saw themselves as a nu metal band.

"We actually always wanted to be Pantera," says bassist Stevie Benton. "By the time our first album had come out bands like Limp Bizkit and Korn were popular, so when *Bodies* became really popular so the logic was that we also were nu metal like Limp Bizkit."

It was Pantera that lured guitarist CJ Pierce and drummer Mike Luce away from their home scene in New Orleans in 1996, leaving behind "mostly blues and a few death metal bands" for the Pantera-inspired groove metal scene that had arisen in Dallas. There, the pair connected with Stevie and Drowning Pool formed as an instrumental three-piece. They later found the missing ingredient in vocalist Dave Williams, the singer providing the requisite snarls to complement their tight grooves, but also crucially bringing with him a gregarious party animal vibe that cemented their reputation as a killer live band.

"Dave was a real firecracker," Stevie adds. "You just never knew what was going to happen. The life of every party to the point where if there *wasn't* a party, he would create one just to become the life of it."

As a four-piece, Drowning Pool began honing the material that would eventually become their debut album, *Sinner*, while playing any open spot they could find in Texas or neighbouring states Louisiana and Oklahoma. In the early days the band's interests were less about global conquest and more how they could fund their party lifestyle.

"We had this huge, well thought-out plan… for how to get a free bar tab," Stevie says. "As things progressed and we built up a crowd we started getting paid for gigs. Of course then we would see this thing where a promoter would come along like, 'Hey, I was going to pay you $200, but you guys drank your bar tab and then drank another $300, so you owe me $100."

Even when they made a loss, they were having the time of their lives. In turn, the crowds were growing at a rate where the band had moved from playing to "the bartenders and their girlfriends" to 500 or 600 people a night. It was here that the band first got the idea to write an ode to the wild crowds they would play to.

"We played shows where people were just *everywhere*," Stevie says. "Climbing on the stage, into the rafters and diving off… That's where this 'let the bodies hit the floor' idea first came in."

"We had this one friend that always tried to stage dive even if there were only like nine people in the crowd, which guaranteed he was gonna hit the floor pretty much every time," CJ recalls. "One time the guy jumped off and shattered his knee in four places!"

Based around a riff CJ had written while the band were still a three-piece, the song existed in various demos before taking its final shape.

"Dave already had the idea with the count-in, but there are different early versions of *Bodies* where we didn't know quite what to say," Stevie says. "There's versions where he's just making things up between numbers. There's one where he pretends to answer a telephone, for whatever reason!"

Drowning Pool ultimately got signed by Wind-Up Records, home of post-grunge superstars Creed. Though ironically, it wasn't the song for which they became best known that grabbed the label's attention.

"We'd recorded this song *Tear Away* that local radio stations really liked and ended up playing lots," Stevie says. "But when Wind-Up heard the full record, they said they were going with *Bodies* as the first single instead. Straight away I thought, 'That's it, our career is ruined before we've even started.' Shows what I fucking know!"

RELEASED ON MAY 14, 2001, *Bodies* steadily climbed its way up the charts, ultimately peaking in the US when it hit No.6. Not coincidentally, the song's ascent up the charts coincided with Drowning Pool's appearance on the 2001 Ozzfest tour, where they joined the likes of Black Sabbath, Slipknot and Linkin Park on a trek across North America.

"Sharon Osbourne ended up moving us up the bill of Ozzfest while we were on the tour," CJ says proudly. "We did the Jägermeister tour straight after, then Music As A Weapon with Disturbed. These were huge arena crowds, but every night we'd go out and do *Bodies* and you'd see the whole place go up."

With heavy radio and MTV play, *Bodies* looked like elevating Drowning Pool to metal's top tier. Yet the events of 9/11 halted the song's ascent – US radio conglomerate Clear Channel added it to a list of songs unofficially banned in the wake of the attacks

HAYLEY MADDEN/GETTY

THE FACTS

RELEASED: 2001

ALBUM: *Sinner*

PERSONNEL: Dave Williams (vocals), CJ Pierce (Guitars), Stevie Benton (Bass), Mike Luce (Drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION: 6 (US Mainstream Rock charts)

CJ, Mike and Stevie have remained constants in the band since day one

“DAVE WILLIAMS WAS A REAL FIRECRACKER. YOU JUST NEVER KNEW WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN”

STEVIE BENTON

on the Twin Towers, deeming its lyrics inappropriate in such tragic circumstances. In turn, this sparked a trend for misinterpreting the song's lyrics to link to acts of violence.

"It's always really frustrated me that people took this song – that was about kids at a rock show – and put all these negative connotations on it," Stevie says. "When Clear Channel just struck it off, they made it seem like there *was* a reason for it to be banned. It took away the ambiguity of the song and people's ability to decide on the meaning for themselves."

Worse was to come. On August 14, 2002, Dave Williams was found dead on the band's tourbus in at a stop off in Manassas, Virginia on that year's Ozzfest. The cause of death was cardiomyopathy, a heart condition that had gone undiagnosed. He was just 30 years old.

"Dave was an incredibly loving guy," CJ says. "His personality really helped people connect with the music and I don't think we'd have got the support we did without him. He loved getting to know people, whether it was fans, other bands or the guys in the bar. To this day, I hang out and watch every band because of what Dave taught me – it's a rock'n'roll show and everybody's there to have a good time."

In November 2002 the band commemorated their fallen bandmate with the documentary *Sinema*, featuring touching tributes from fans. Proceeds from the movie's sale were set aside to help purchase a retirement home for Dave's parents, something the frontman had told the band was a dream for him.

Though Drowning Pool continued after his death, they spent much of the 2000s in a state of identity crisis, working with a number of other singers (including Soil's Ryan McCombs) until they finally stabilised their line-up with Jasen Moreno in 2012. A local boy who played in other groups when Drowning Pool were starting out, Jasen admits his long-standing relationship with the band – and with Dave Williams in particular – makes *Bodies* a particularly poignant song to play live.

"*Bodies* is my absolute favourite part of the set," Jasen explains. "That song was undeniable when it came out – we all knew that – so being in the position to be onstage singing it with the fans is unreal."

The late, great Dave Williams was the life and soul of every party

Though *Bodies* has continued to be misinterpreted in the mainstream media from time to time in the two decades since its release (including reports it was used by interrogators at Guantanamo Bay detention camps and was linked to the 2011 shooting of Congresswoman Gabby Giffords), its true meaning has been embraced by the culture that inspired it in the first place.

Played everywhere from clubs, gigs and bars to wrestling shows, MMA tournaments and even in movies, *Bodies* is rightly hailed as a bona fide anthem for metal culture, not just Drowning Pool's biggest song, but one of the all-time great metal club anthems. Unlike so many other bands, however, Drowning Pool don't resent being immediately associated with their big hit.

"I've never really understood that thing where a band doesn't want to play their biggest song live," CJ says. "I'd play *Bodies* five times a night if people really wanted it that bad! I find it really cool when we get young fans coming to a show and saying 'I just got into that song *Bodies* – it's awesome!' because to them it doesn't matter the song is 20 years old, they're hearing it just now for the first time."

"I think that *is* the legacy of *Bodies*," Stevie adds. "Even now, whenever somebody needs a shot of adrenaline and to psych somebody up, that is the go-to song over everything else. It's a shot in the arm that will get you pumped up."

Looking at pretty much any dance-floor at a metal club over the past 20 years, we're inclined to agree.

"ONE TIME A GUY JUMPED OFF THE STAGE AND SHATTERED HIS KNEE IN FOUR PLACES"
CJ PIERCE

TIM MOSENFELDER/GETTY

Animosity era Sevendust: *Angel's Son* was their tribute to Snot (see p.47) singer Lynn Strait

SEVENDUST

Nu metal survivors who transcended the scene

SURE, SEVENDUST WERE a product of the nu metal era. Their self-titled 1997 debut album dropped at the precise moment the genre was about to explode, they collaborated with Chino Moreno on the song *Bender* from 1999's *Home* album, and they toured early on with all the usual suspects (Korn, Limp Bizkit, Disturbed, etc).

But strip away the trappings and the Atlanta, Georgia five-piece were basically a rock solid metal band who would have thrived in any era. Their MVP was – and still is – powerhouse vocalist Lajon Witherspoon, a man whose heart-on-sleeve voice made nu metal's bawling man-babies sound like, well, bawling man-babies.

They had some powerful friends from the start, including former Twisted Sister guitarist JJ French, who produced their self-titled debut album. It reputedly sold a paltry 310 copies in its first week, but eventually reached Gold status – testament to the band's relentless work ethic.

Subsequent albums *Home* and 2001's *Animosity* placed them squarely in the nu metal mix, though Sevendust's ability to drop a shining melody amid the downtuned grindings and rap-metal-adjacent barrage set them apart from many contemporaries.

That ability to transcend the boundaries of nu metal helped them survive its eventual collapse. A string of albums have kept them in the upper reaches of the *Billboard* chart, while the band gradually uncoupled themselves from the shackles of the scene that spawned them. Today, almost 30 years after they formed, they remain one of the most consistently popular and inventive bands the nu metal era produced.

GETTY/PAUL NATKIN

HYBRID THEORY CHANGED EVERYTHING

… it's as simple as that. Linkin Park's debut album gatecrashed the mainstream, redefining heavy music and capturing the minds of a generation

They seemed to appear out of nowhere. Fronted by the unlikely tag team of rapper Mike Shinoda and unassuming-yet-ferocious screamer Chester Bennington, Linkin Park fused together cutting-edge electronics, gleaming pop melodies and riffs slung lower than a pair of baggy jeans. Their debut album, *Hybrid Theory*, cut across genres so confidently that it became a runaway mainstream success following its release on October 24, 2000, racing up the charts and launching the band to fame in spectacular fashion. The following year, it would be the biggest-selling record in the *world*, defining a generation and introducing countless people to the world of heavy music. Recounted by those who were there, and including archive interview quotes from Chester, this is the incredible story of *Hybrid Theory*.

Linkin Park started in the bedroom of Los Angeles resident Mike Shinoda. He wrote the bones of *Hybrid Theory* while he was still in his teens, and his band, Xero, would spend weeks and weeks writing and demoing to perfect their new blend of hip hop and rock. With an ambitious streak, a strong work ethic and some good connections, they were steadily moving towards their goal. But they were missing something: a defining voice.

Over in Arizona, Chester Bennington had been fronting much-loved local band Grey Daze. During his 23rd birthday party, he received a call from a contact who knew A&R man Jeff Blue. Jeff asked Chester to lay down some vocals over Xero's demos, and when he heard the results, he immediately flew the singer out to meet the band.

Mike Shinoda: "The very earliest incarnations of the songs from *Hybrid Theory* were written at my parents' house when I had just finished high school. *A Place For My Head* was one of those first songs, but I wasn't thinking of writing an album – I was barely considering starting a band! I had a four-track recorder, a guitar that we plugged directly into a tiny little amp, and a vocal mic. The whole set-up was maybe worth $300. We actually sent out a bunch of tapes of those recordings, including to a guy who we knew had signed Korn. Amazingly, he called us back! When I told him about my set-up, he was like, 'That doesn't make any sense – these songs sound really good!' And even though he was never in the position to sign us, that was really the start of it."

Chester Bennington: "I had basically decided to retire from music. I'd got a job in real estate and thought that while I would probably still ▶

KRISTIN CALLAHAN/EVERETT COLLECTION/ALAMY

make tunes for fun, I would need to find something else to do full-time. A dude who had been working with my old band [Grey Daze] gave me a call, going, 'I've got these guys and they're writing this great music but they really need a singer.' I immediately was asking all sorts of questions, like, 'How old are they? How long have they been doing this?' because I didn't want to waste my fucking time. He said, 'Well, I'll just send you this demo', which turned out to have two tracks on one side and instrumentals on the other. I listened to the instrumental side first and immediately I was like, 'This is it, these are the ones.' The next thing I know, I'd flown to California and was sat outside Zomba Music Publishing, opposite Whisky A Go Go on Sunset Strip."

Jeff Blue: "Chester had such an iconic crack and tone in his voice, that basically every crack told a story. And it was so believable. I just knew at that point that this is the chemistry I was looking for. Because I always knew the band could be huge with the right complement."

Chester: "When I finally met the guys, I remember that they seemed very nice, very smart, very serious and, most importantly, they had a plan, which was pretty refreshing."

The plan was to get signed, but it was a hard slog. The band put themselves in front of every label they could, their self-belief never wavering in the face of indifferent suits who didn't understand how to market them.

While they waited for their big break, Mike and Chester got to know each other, forging a bond that would become crucial to the evolution of the band. Chester opened up about the tough times he'd gone through in Arizona: the breakdown of his parents' marriage, sexual abuse, resulting drug and alcohol dependencies. The pair poured these feelings of anguish into their lyrics, creating empowering songs "that people from all sorts of different backgrounds could relate to".

After a year, Jeff landed a job at Warner Bros. and signed the band – then named Hybrid Theory but soon to be Linkin Park – to the label. Later, critics would seize upon the fact that Chester was recruited by execs, labelling them a manufactured band.

Chester: "No one wanted us, but we knew we had something fucking special. We just kept pushing. Most bands probably try out in front of three labels, get rejected and give up. We played in front of 45 but our attitude was, 'These guys are fucking stupid if they can't see what we've got.' We knew what we had and never doubted it."

Mike: "We showcased for every fucking label there was, and they all turned us down."

Chester: "I think we confused people. Nobody really knew what to do with us. They were thinking, 'How do we promote this? Where does this go at radio?' I could see how they thought it was just too much work. It was a pain in the ass, but it gave us time to figure out who we were as a band, and gave Mike [Shinoda] and I time to get comfortable with one another."

Mike: "We did get a reputation for being a business rather than a band. But that was because we were so focused on getting our stuff done. It wasn't in the name of business – it was in the name of building up this thing we had worked so hard to create. We were prepared to do everything in our power to be successful on all levels."

Warners booked them two months at north Hollywood's NRG Recording Studios, with producer Don Gilmore, who had previously worked with pop-punk bands Eve 6 and Lit. Chester recalled the sessions as "intense" – at one point the label tried to ditch Mike ("which is probably the funniest thing in the world," laughed Chester) – with vocals being tracked at the 11th hour.

While working on the song that would become *One Step Closer*, Chester ended up pacing the studio lobby, punching the walls in frustration at Don's repeated requests for him to improve the chorus. The band also had a fight on their hands when it came to convincing the label of their vision.

Don Gilmore: "The demos were brought to me through my manager and I thought it was good. I didn't necessarily think it was amazing, but I liked that they were trying to do something unique. So I met with them – they were looking at some other producers – and I went to a rehearsal, and Chester started singing and I was just like, 'Oh my god, this is really special.' I'd never really heard somebody sing that incredibly just in a little crappy rehearsal room."

Chester: "I just wanted to punch that dude [Don Gilmore] in the face. I was so pissed – nothing I did was good enough for him. I thought, *'Man, everything you say to me takes me one step closer to the edge... and I'm about to break.'* And then I thought, 'Wait, that might actually work!'"

Don: "When I'd ask for these things and I'd push them to do better, they would. They would maybe get frustrated and angry, but the results were insane."

Chester: "We would rewrite lyrics, like, 75 times," says Chester. "It was crazy. But because we didn't take the short cuts, it ended up meaning more. We believed in what we were doing so much, and we were like, 'Fuck, why can't anybody else see this?' But when the album came out, I guess they saw it..."

"I WANTED TO PUNCH THE IDIOTS IN THE FACE"

CHESTER BENNINGTON

Mike: "There was a guy at our label who, essentially, didn't like us, but he was a mixer and producer. We wanted Andy Wallace [who did eventually mix *Hybrid Theory*] to do the record, but this guy demanded *One Step Closer* from us to show us 'what it should sound like'. We gave him the song and he basically tried to completely restructure it, putting the *'Shut up when I'm talking to you'* part at the start – which obviously totally ruins that moment – then gave it back to us, all like, 'Check this shit out.'"

Chester: "These guys sat me down and were like, 'Oh, you've got such an amazing voice, you could be such a shining star.' They wanted to see if I would pull a coup to get Mike out. These dudes were so fucking stupid, man. They told me I'd be the face of the band and that Mike had no story 'cos he was just some kid from Agoura – all these dumb, superficial things. They wanted some fucking rapper from New York who no one knew to come and do vocals on the record. I just wanted to punch those idiots in the face because they couldn't see that golden fucking teat of awesomeness that was right in front of them. Mike's one of the most productive songwriters of our era, I think. God knows how many No.1s we've had, but if he wasn't in the band, we wouldn't have had any of those!"

Hybrid Theory was released in the US on October 24, 2000, and went to No.16 in the Billboard chart. Chester bet a friend that the album would sell 500,000 copies by Christmas; it actually reached that figure by Thanksgiving, at the end of November, and kept rising ("Eighteen months later we were still selling 100,000 copies a week, and you are thinking, 'Holy shit, this is some Michael Jackson shit, I don't understand what's going on!'").

Yet the elation of their hard-earned win was marred by a gruelling touring schedule and a particularly troublesome stint with Deftones, not to mention gatekeepers who branded them a nu metal boy band.

Mike: "We had to defend ourselves from that absurd shit forever but it was totally out of left field. We never thought anyone would think something so ridiculous, but all of a sudden people were talking about it!"

Chester: "It gave us something to prove and drove us on, for sure. There was a lot of false perception about us but what we did, instead of talking about it, was make it our mission that when we played, we wanted everyone who played after us to go, 'Fuck!' We wanted to be the band that no one wanted to tour with because we would turn up, crush the fucking crowd and then everyone would want to leave after us. We wanted to kick people in the face."

Mike: "That tour was one of the most stressful stints we've ever done. We basically followed winter around the world for six months and we were all always sick. And then to top it off, ▶

KRISTIN CALLAHAN/EVERETT COLLECTION/ALAMY

Off the wall: Linkin Park grabbed an awful lot of people and drew them to heavy music

the guys in Deftones started to get a bit jealous and began treating us really poorly. Steph [Carpenter, guitars] and Chino [Moreno, vocalist] said some pretty nasty things in interviews. We tried not to say anything back because we didn't want more tension on the tour but it was pretty miserable. I even saw some fans doing heroin outside one of those shows. Totally fucking horrible shit, man. It was a dark period overall, even though things were, ostensibly, going so well."

Chester: "We wanted to create art that spoke for itself: nothing more, nothing less. We know that a lot of people didn't like it but that achieved another thing I love – when people hate you so much they can't stop talking about you."

Linkin Park shook off the ire of metal's self-appointed guardians, and on sales alone (more than 20 million!) *Hybrid Theory* stands as a phenomenal success. But more than that, it connected with a cohort of people who had never heard anything like it. Countless bands today, from Bring Me The Horizon to Of Mice & Men, credit the record with inspiring them to make music themselves. Like Black Sabbath, Metallica and Iron Maiden before them, Linkin Park picked up heavy music's torch and carried it forwards, making the most influential album of this century.

While *Hybrid Theory* had broad appeal, it pulled off the neat trick of speaking to people on an individual level. As well as changing the lives of those who created it, it changed the lives of those who listened to it. Since Chester's tragic passing in 2017, Linkin Park fans have held the record especially close, as a snapshot of a time and a sound that can never be recaptured.

Chester: "In my opinion, we actually kept metal alive. We played a surprise Vans Warped Tour show [in Ventura, California on June 22, 2014] and had a whole bunch of singers from other bands come up and sing with us [including members of A Day To Remember and The Devil Wears Prada]. Every one of them was either, 'Your band was my first record' or 'Your band is the reason I'm playing music.' I was like, 'Holy shit!' It was maybe the first time where I felt like we were the band that people looked at in the way that I look at Deftones and Metallica and Stone Temple Pilots."

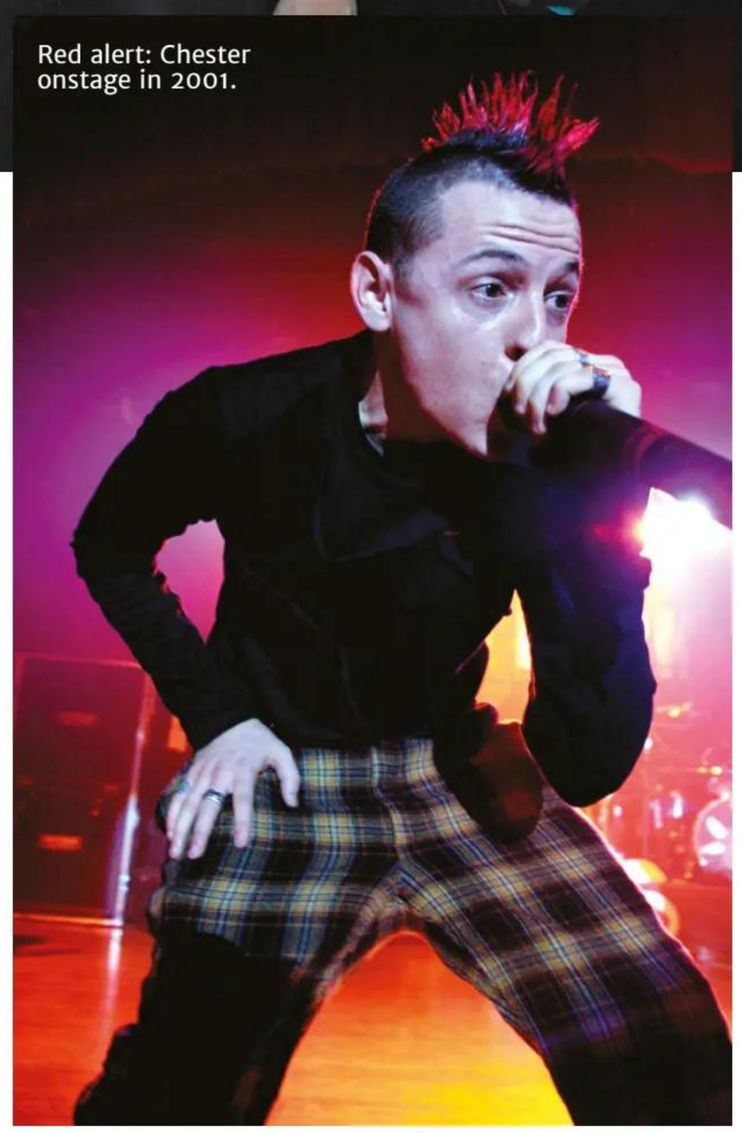
Mike: "I think that the difference between us and someone like Korn or Limp Bizkit is that, to me, a lot of that music was made for a frat party, a drunken brawl, slutty dudes taking their tops off and feeding off their own testosterone. What we didn't connect with in that scene was that there wasn't a lot of room for more introspective emotion. People would ask us, 'Well, Jonathan Davis practically grew up in a morgue and was molested and all these horrible things. What gives you the right to be angry?' But you don't have to have gone through the worst things in the world to be sad. I think that's something that ultimately really connected with our fans: that you don't have to be an outcast and a fuck-up to take something from this music on an emotional level. If that makes us dull, then fine."

Chester: "What happened with *Hybrid Theory* felt like someone had stuck me in a wormhole and fired me into a new dimension. And nothing was ever the same again."

"IN MY OPINION, WE ACTUALLY KEPT METAL ALIVE"

CHESTER BENNINGTON

Linkin Park (left to right): Rob Bourdon, Brad Delson, Chester Bennington, Mike Shinoda, Joe Hahn



Red alert: Chester onstage in 2001.

GETTY

PRESS. WORDS: TOM DOYLE, PAUL BRANNIGAN, ELEANOR GOODMAN. ADDITIONAL QUOTES: BILLBOARD, IHEARTMEDIA.

Static-X: nu metal's leading bearded weirdos

LARRY MARANO/GETTY

STATIC-X

Nu metal's industrial wing

EVERY NU METAL BAND had their USP, and Static-X's was Wayne Static. With his towering thatch and Freddy Krueger-dress sense, the frontman was one part freak, one part cartoon character, spitting out lyrics about everything from coprophilia (*Love Dump*) to drug abuse (*Push It*).

Wayne and drummer Ken Jay had played together in the band Deep Blue Dream in their native Chicago but it wasn't until they pair moved from the Windy City to LA, hooked up with guitarist Koichi Fukuda and bassist Tony Campos, swapped their alt-metal for a Ministry-inspired industrial/metal mash-up that things began to take off.

Debut album *Wisconsin Death Trip* was a hit, shifting a million copies after its 1999 release. But success bought its own problems. Tours were long and exhausting. Koichi Fukuda quit before the release of the band's second album, 2001's *Machine*; Ken Jay left before the follow-up, 2003's *Shadow Zone*.

Wayne and Tony ploughed on before the band went on hiatus in 2011, ostensibly to allow the singer to make a solo album. But Wayne relaunched Static-X the following year without any original members, causing ill-feeling with his ex-colleagues.

Sadly, a reunion would never happen. Wayne died in 2014, partly the result of his struggles with prescription drugs.

But there's an unlikely post-script to the story. The three surviving original members relaunched the band in 2019 with a mysterious called Xero – wearing a Wayne mask. Either a bad joke or the height of black humour. "Wayne had a morbid sense of humour," said Ken Jay. "I can honestly tell you he would think this is funny."

RIOTS. TERR DEATH THREATS.

TOXICITY

After the success of their debut album, System Of A Down risked it all for 2001's follow-up *Toxicity*. But even they couldn't predict the craziness that would follow

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

LARRY MARANO/AVALON

"DO YOU HATE AMERICA?"

Serj Tankian knew he'd be in for a rough ride when he agreed to appear on Howard Stern's radio show on the morning of September 20, 2001. Loudmouthed 'shock jock' Stern was one of America's most infamous DJs. But at that precise moment, System Of A Down's singer happened to be one of America's most infamous rock stars.

Seven days earlier, the frontman had posted a controversial essay titled *Understanding Oil* on his band's website. In it, he analysed what he saw as the real reasons behind the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon just 48 hours before. The arguments he made were complex yet clear-headed, blaming decades of failed American foreign policy. But the fact remained that Serj Tankian – a man born in the Middle East – was saying the unsayable, and now his patriotism was being questioned on air by Howard Stern: "Do you hate America?"

"I wrote the essay because I was trying to understand it myself, and it really backfired," says Serj today. "They had been talking shit about what I said on the *Howard Stern Show*, mischaracterising my words and intentions. He wanted me on to explain my words. I had to get on and defend myself."

All of that would have been chaotic enough at the best of times, but System Of A Down had released their second album, *Toxicity*, a week prior to the 9/11 attacks. That record was a dazzling carnival of ideas that disentangled System from the all-pervading nu metal scene they'd been bundled in with a few years earlier. Now the band were on the verge of something bigger and much more important.

Serj Tankian survived his on-air entanglement with Howard Stern. For all the controversy, *Toxicity* proved to be a game-changer for System Of A Down, transforming them from cult oddballs into a powerful unifying force. Twenty years later, it stands as one of modern metal's most significant albums – a success story shaped by riots, bans, controversy, turmoil and the kind of world-altering event that no one could see coming.

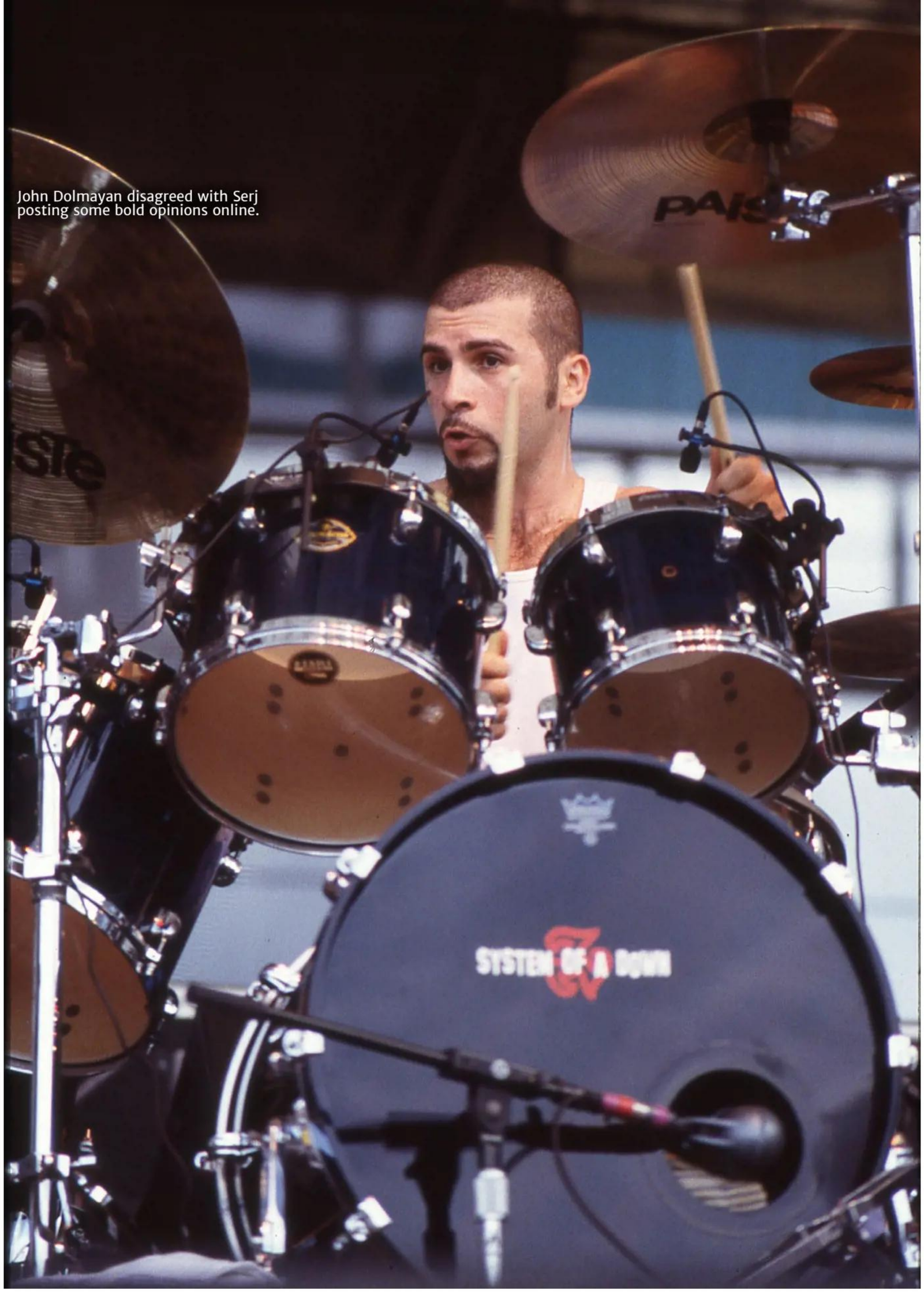
It's easy to forget just how strange System of A Down were when their self-titled debut album landed in June 1998. Early publicity photos of the band looking like shaven-headed prison-yard escapees (Serj excepted) did little justice to their music, which could switch from psychotic waltz to death metal roar in a heartbeat.

System had been kicking around the LA club scene at the birth of what would come to be known as nu metal, but their surreal musical Halloween parade had next to nothing in common with the performative angst or dick-swinging braggadocio that characterised that scene. Neither did the band themselves – their Armenian-American heritage simultaneously defined them and set them apart. No one else was singing about the history of geo-political conflict (as they did on *War?*), or calling out the Turkish government for refusing to acknowledge a state-sanctioned genocide dating back more than 80 years (as they did in pretty much every interview).

"There were a lot of sceptics, because we were trying to promote an Armenian rock band, which hadn't been done before," says Dino Paredes, A&R manager at label American Recordings and the man who brought them to the attention of label head Rick Rubin. "Back then, if you were different and 'weird', that was a liability. With this band, it wasn't. It was a positive factor."

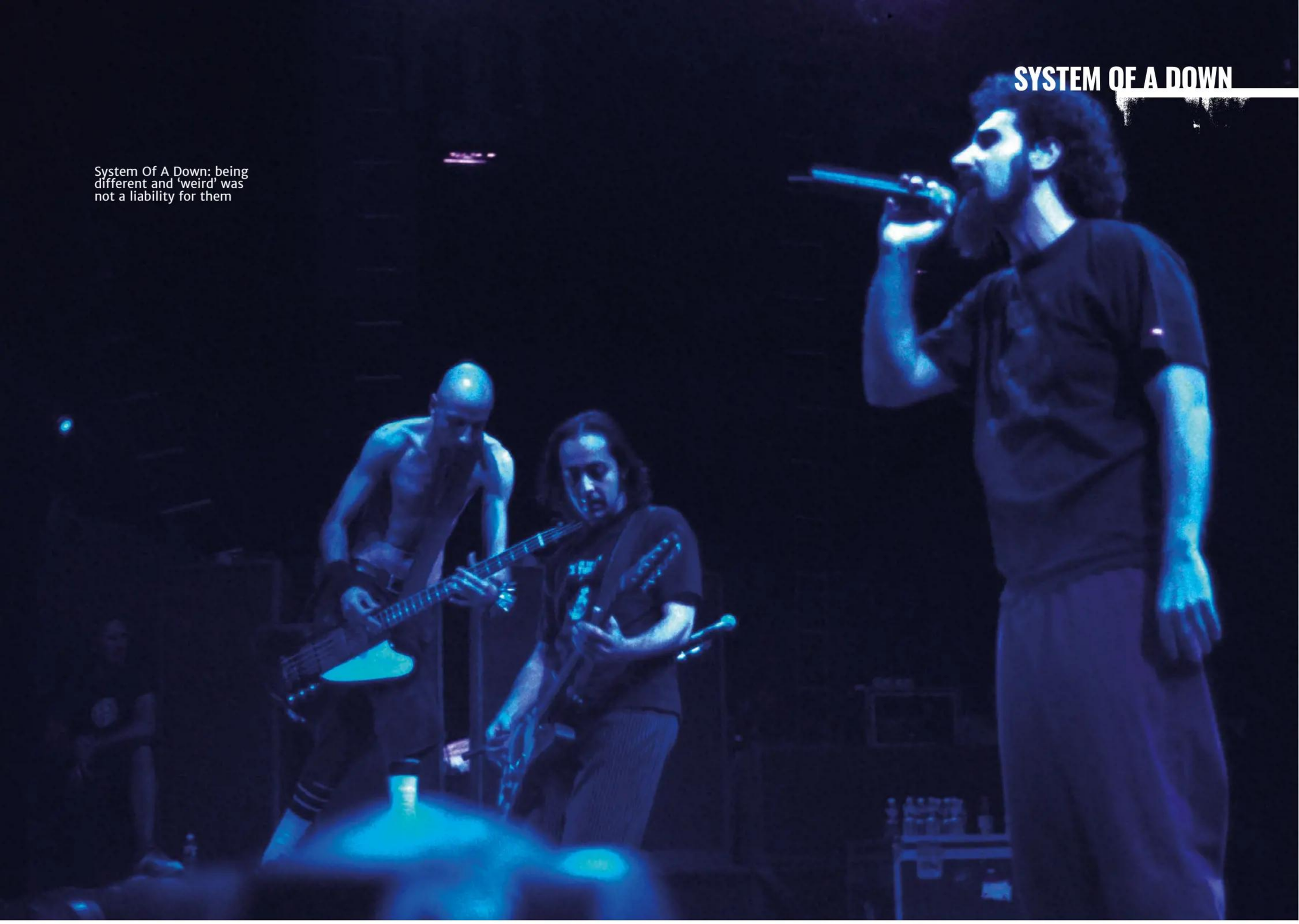
Something about the kaleidoscopic blitz of System's music clicked with a generation bombarded by the escalating sensory assault of late 90s pop culture (it didn't hurt that they had a star-making label boss and producer like Rick Rubin in their corner).

Ted Stryker, a DJ on taste-making Los Angeles alternative rock radio station KROQ, was the first person to play System's debut single *Sugar* on the radio in the LA area, if not the



John Dolmayan disagreed with Serj posting some bold opinions online.

FRANK WHITE



System Of A Down: being different and 'weird' was not a liability for them

STEPHANIE CABRAL

entire country. "I'd seen them play [Sunset Strip club] The Roxy, and you'd have thought it was Guns N' Roses or Mötley Crüe playing given the amount of people who were there," says Ted. "The first time I played *Sugar*, the phone lines lit up. It wasn't just their fans, it was people going: 'What *is* that? What's the story with these guys? People were hooked from that second."

System Of A Down wasn't an out-of-the-box success, but by the beginning of the new millennium it had sold upwards of half a million copies in the US (bagging the band a spot on the high-profile compilation *Chef Aid: The South Park Album* in the process). By the time they entered Hollywood's Cello Studios with Rick Rubin to record the follow-up, they had the wind in their sails and more than 40 songs to choose from.

"Everything was starting to happen for us," says guitarist Daron Malakian. "We were playing bigger places ourselves, opening for bigger bands in arenas. With the second album, it felt like we were ready to take on the world."

This time around, everything would be bigger, louder, heavier, bolder. Daron promised "12 tracks of guitar

"IT FELT LIKE WE WERE READY TO TAKE ON THE WORLD"

DARON MALAKIAN

on each song", though that barely did justice to the musical and lyrical inventiveness that ran through the new material. Tracks such as *Prison Song* and *Needles* doubled down on the why-use-one-idea-when-half-a-dozen-will-do? approach of the debut, while the lyrics Serj and Daron brought to the table were enigmatic and impenetrable but never less than vivid (what the hell does *'Wired were the eyes of a horse on a jet pilot'* mean anyway?).

The sessions were hard work, but fun. "There were late, late hours," says Daron. "I was in my early 20s and there was a lot of experimentation of substances. Let's leave it at that…"

The energy in the room could easily boil over, and often did. A trivial argument over a single word in the album's second song, *Needles*, escalated to epic proportions. Serj wanted to sing, 'Pull the tapeworm out of my ass' but Daron and bassist Shavo Odadjian were having none of it: "That doesn't sound cool," they told the frontman.

They eventually settled on replacing "my ass" with "your ass", though only after a bust-up that Rick Rubin later claimed could have ended System there and then. "I felt like the band could have broken up over the lyric," the producer said. "It was so extreme, but it speaks to the passion in the band."

Things occasionally got physical. At one point Daron and drummer John Dolmayan got into it with each other over some long-forgotten difference of opinion. John hit his bandmate in the face, busting his lip. Daron responded by whacking his aggressor over the head with a microphone stand.

"Shavo and Serj were looking at us saying, 'Awww, man, we're done'," Daron recalled in 2005. "But right after we fought, we took each other to the hospital and got stitched up right next to each other. Both of us were sitting there laughing, saying, 'This is one of the coolest moments in the history of our band.'"

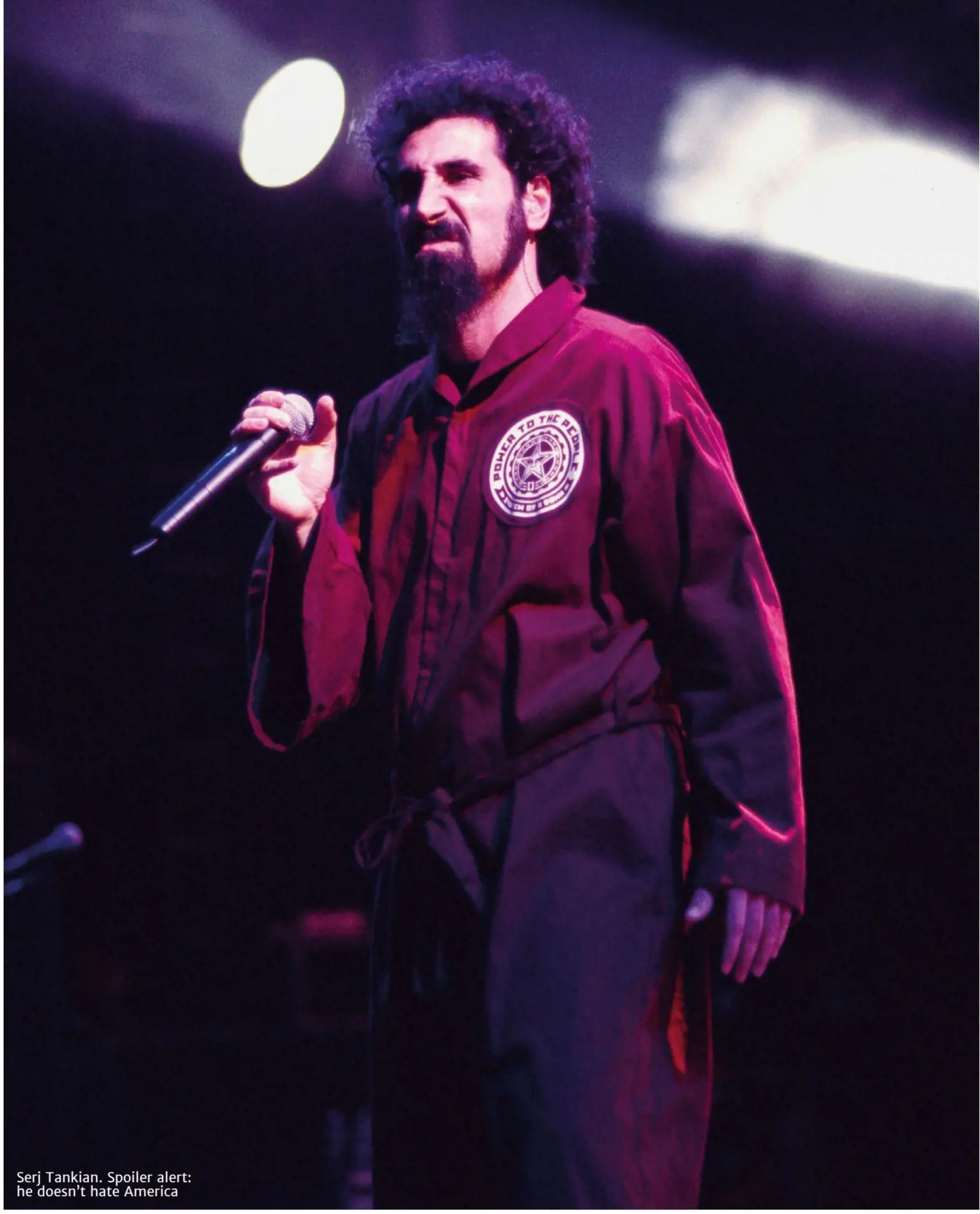
Other musicians occasionally dropped by. Mike Patton was one. "I felt stupid not asking him to guest on a track," a rueful Serj later said. Another was Tom Morello, who delivered his verdict on the songs that would appear on *Toxicity*: "That's crazy-person music."

Much of the album did sound crazy on the surface, but there was often a method to their madness. *Prison Song* may have been deliberately disjointed, flipping from scratchy, jerky oddness to adamantium-plated riffs and full-throated death-roars, but it was an ideal, if unique vehicle for Serj's damning indictment of the US penal system. The title track cast a jaundiced eye over the band's hometown of Los Angeles, the frontman whisper-roaring like a street-corner shaman standing in the middle of Hollywood and Vine. And while the jokey *Bounce* clearly used a pogo stick metaphor to describe an orgy, what exactly head-spinning single *Chop Suey!* and climactic slow-burner *Aerials* were about was less apparent.

Ironically, the album's most straightforward song was the one with the most potential to cause controversy. The semi-ballad *ATWA* drew its inspiration from jailed cult leader Charles Manson's proto-green eco-manifesto – the title stood for 'Air, Trees, Water and Animals'. Admitting the influence of a homicidal, racist psychopath would be cause for instant cancellation these days, but back then Daron Malakian – the song's chief lyricist – saw no issue with it, despite the likes of Axl Rose being criticised for flirting with Manson's songs and imagery a few years earlier. "There are things that I agree with Manson on," said Daron, explaining the inspiration. "There are others that I don't. He's got some racial views that aren't exactly mine…"

In the end, this Manson-inspired micro-anthem barely raised an eyebrow. There was controversy around the corner, but at that point no one could conceive of where it would come from.

And anyway, before that, there was the riot.



Serj Tankian. Spoiler alert: he doesn't hate America

Monday September 3, 2001, was Labor Day in the US. Anyone travelling down Schrader Boulevard in central Hollywood in their car might have noticed people streaming into the otherwise anonymous parking lot where System Of A Down were due to play a launch show for *Toxicity* ahead of its release the following day.

Advance buzz around the album was deafening. *Chop Suey!* – that mad, shapeshifting track that sounded like four different songs clamouring for our attention – had been glued to US radio and MTV since it was released as the album's first single three weeks earlier. A series of summer shows in Europe indicated that appetite was only intensifying after the success of their debut album (footage from August's Reading Festival shows the vast crowd absolutely going off when the band drop *Chop Suey!*).

"WE GOT STITCHED UP RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER"
DARON MALAKIAN

This launch gig was intended to bottle that excitement. Such was the anticipation that some kids had been sleeping there overnight, while others arrived hours before the gates were due to open.

"We'd promised fans on the radio that we'd play this free outdoor show in this huge parking lot," remembers Serj. "I guess we were expecting 3,000 to 4,000 people to show up."

That figure turned out to be inaccurate to the tune of several thousand. Depending on the source, between 10,000 and 15,000 people were crammed into the Hollywood parking lot that afternoon. "I remember a lot of people and not a lot of security," says Dino Paredes.

The authorities were concerned that it could be dangerous and refused to let the show begin. The scheduled start time of 4pm passed and the crowd began to get restless. As the minutes ticked past, their frustration ▶

STEPHANIE CABRAL

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grew. And then it was announced that the show would not be taking place due to safety issues. The backdrop behind the stage was taken down, which is when everything exploded.

Serj and his bandmates watched the riot erupt at one of their own gigs from across the street. System were holed up in a small club where they had planned to prepare for the show. As soon as fans broke the barriers and stormed the stage, he knew the band had to do something.

"We had this horrific idea that someone might get seriously hurt," he says. "We were really concerned for everyone's well-being."

Serj and his bandmates tried to convince the authorities to let them go onstage. It would calm everyone down, they reasoned. They could tell the crowd they would arrange another show in a proper venue to make up for it. The local fire marshal was having none of it.

"They said, 'Absolutely not'," recalls Serj. "In fact they threatened to arrest any of us trying to make it to the stage."

Serj was incensed. He grabbed his bandmates. "I went, 'Fuck these guys, let's go and do this, let 'em arrest us, who cares?'" he says. "And then my lawyer grabbed me and went, 'This is Los Angeles, they will sue the fuck out of your band, they will take everything from you. I remember being extremely stressed, thinking, 'I'm doing fucking music, this is not how it was supposed to be.'"

Local TV news crews swarmed in to capture the carnage. By the time things finally calmed down, six people had been arrested and more than $30,000 of damage had been done to the band's gear.

"I wasn't thinking about what this meant for the record, or whether it reflected how big we were becoming," says Serj. "I was too busy looking at the news on TV and seeing fans getting trampled by horse-riding LA police. I mean, shit, we inadvertently started an LA riot and we didn't even do anything."

On the plus side, it showed that System Of A Down could unite people despite being nowhere near a stage, even if it was in the form of a riot. Similarly, the media coverage it

"I SAW FANS GETTING TRAMPLED"

SERJ TANKIAN

System Of A Down (left to right): John Dolmayan, Daron Malakian, Serj Tankian, Shavo Odadjian

LARRY MARANO/AVALON

prompted proved there really is no such thing as bad press – although thanks to Serj Tankian's very public criticism of the US establishment, that notion would soon be severely tested.

Toxicity was released on Tuesday, September 4, 2001. A week later, on September 11, it entered the US Billboard charts at No.2, just behind R'n'B star Alicia Keys' debut album, *Songs In A Minor*. Within a few hours it had leapfrogged the latter to claim the No.1 spot after the chart's compilers added on 50,000 sales of a limited-edition CD version they had overlooked.

The band barely had time to register their triumph. At 8.46am, the first of two planes flew into one of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. Seventeen minutes later, another plane hit the second tower. Suddenly, everything changed.

"From a label point of view, it was all about trying to figure out what it meant for the band," says Dino Paredes. "And then Serj felt compelled to make his statement…"

Serj Tankian had more on his mind than chart positions or album sales. The singer was born in Beirut, and spent his early years living in Lebanon before moving to the US in 1975. He was more plugged into Middle Eastern politics than most native Westerners. He knew that America's failed foreign policies were the root cause of the 9/11 attacks. And he said as much.

Serj posted the *Understanding Oil* essay on System's site without telling his bandmates. It was quickly taken down, though not before the shit had hit the fan. "If you read it, what he says is very accurate," says Dino. "But it caused a bit of a backlash."

That backlash was as swift as it was predictable. Howard Stern was a high-profile critic, but others were no less determined to deplore Serj as an anti-American and a traitor to his country. He received abuse and death threats. Even members of his own band were aghast. "You're a smart guy, what the fuck are you doing? Are you trying to get us killed?" John Dolmayan asked his bandmate. "I'm so sorry, but it's the truth," responded Serj, apologising for his actions but not his intent.

While the frontman attempted to pour oil on troubled waters via his Howard Stern interview, a potential shitstorm was brewing on another front. In the days after 9/11, giant US media conglomerate Clear Channel clandestinely circulated a memo list of "lyrically questionable" songs that ▶

THE NUMBERS BEHIND TOXICITY

Crazy sales and even crazier streams

44

Number of minutes the album takes up in total, including bonus hidden track *Arto*

1

Billboard chart number *Toxicity* peaked at. It peaked there in Canada, too!

220,000

Copies of *Toxicity* sold in the US in its first week on sale

12 MILLION

The number of copies it's estimated to have sold since

15,000

Estimated number of fans involved in the *Toxicity* release show riot

3,213

Total number of times *Toxicity* songs have been played live

1 BILLION

Number of views for *Chop Suey!* on Youtube

1.7 BILLION

Total number of combined streams of all *Toxicity* tracks on Spotify

73

Current score out of 100 awarded to the album via Metacritic. Bit harsh?!

165

Total number of songs banned from the radio following 9/11, including *Chop Suey!*

SOURCES: SPOTIFY, YOUTUBE, SETLIST.FM, KERRANG!, METACRITIC, BILLBOARD.

ALL NUMBERS CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

DJs were advised not play – a ban in all but name. *Chop Suey!*, with its reference to *'self-righteous suicide'*, was right there at the top of the list.

"In music, that's a badge of honour," says System guitarist Daron Malakian. "So many great rock bands have been banned. It's almost like you're not part of the cool group if you're not banned once or twice. I think it made the song more popular."

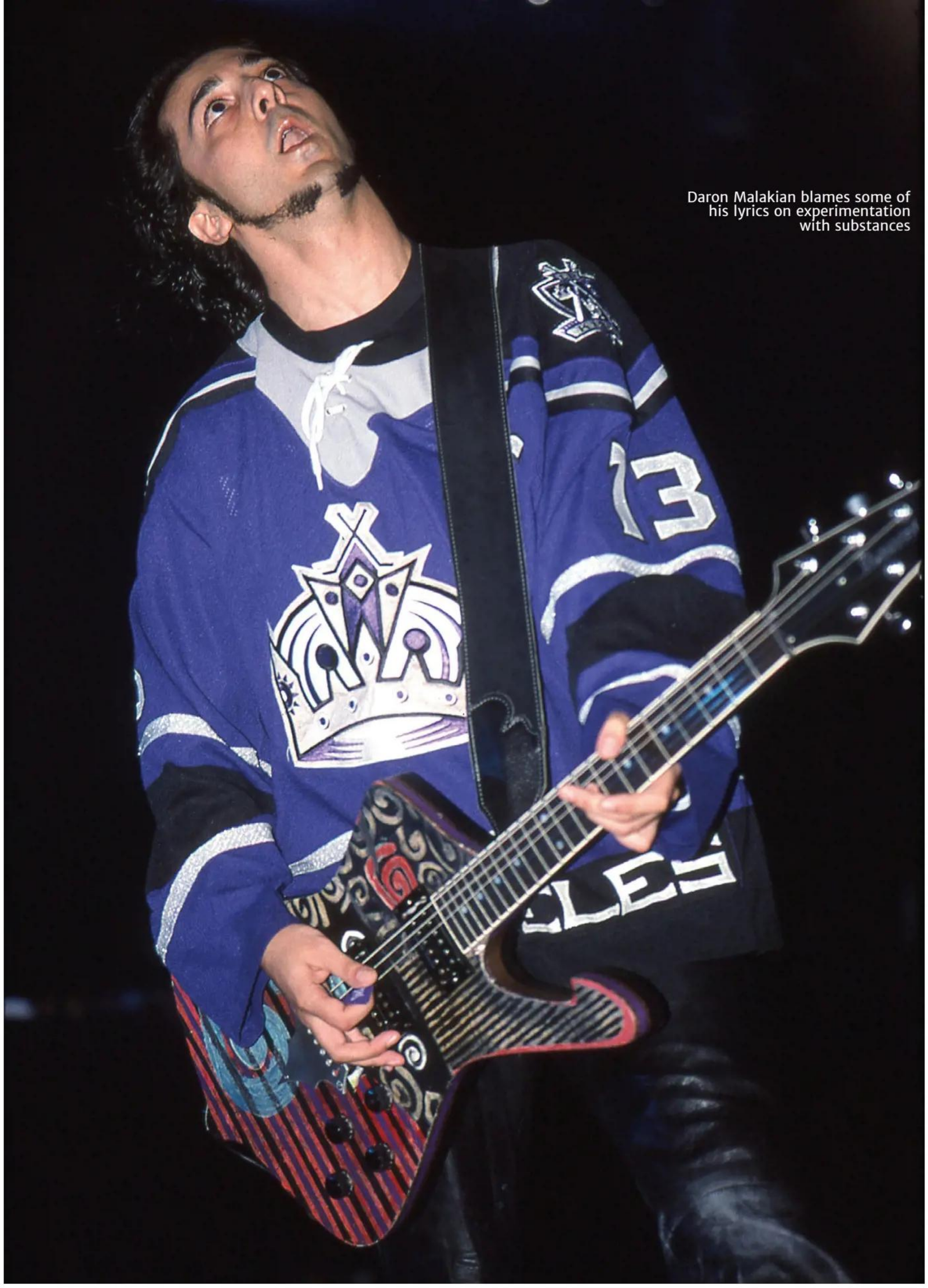
The essay and the Clear Channel memo were two separate flashpoints, but either could have sunk *Toxicity*. Factor in the pall of grief, fear and confusion hanging over everything, and System's path forward suddenly looked a lot more uncertain and chaotic than it did two weeks earlier.

The litmus test would be their co-headlining tour with Slipknot, whose second album, *Iowa*, had been released the week before *Toxicity*. The six-week run would be billed under the banner The Pledge Of Allegiance Tour – an ironic reference to the patriotic custom of pledging allegiance to the US flag, which looked a lot less smart in the wake of Serj's *Understanding Oil* essay.

"There was this intense stress," says the singer of the tour. "There's terrorist threats every day, I'm getting shit for activism and speaking truth to power – all these different threat levels. And we're out there in front of 20,000 people every night. We're thinking, 'Are we safe? Are they safe?'"

Thankfully, no harm came to either the band or their fans. At least not from terrorists – Shavo Odadjian was allegedly beaten up and racially insulted by security guards when he was trying to get backstage at a show in Grand Rapids, Michigan, prompting the bassist to file a lawsuit against the security company

"I had my pass on, and they still kinda beat me up and threw me out of the arena," Shavo told *Metal Hammer* in 2017. "I'd just gotten offstage, but these motherfuckers just didn't like me for whatever reason. It was a stressful time."



Daron Malakian blames some of his lyrics on experimentation with substances

FRANK WHITE

"THERE WERE TERRORIST THREATS EVERY DAY"

SERJ TANKIAN

In the end, the stresses that surrounded the release of the album and the subsequent tour were worth it. *Toxicity* was certified triple platinum in the US in November 2002 for sales of three million copies. The title track and *Aerials* followed *Chop Suey!* into heavy rotation.

The songs that Tom Morello described as "crazy-person music" had struck a chord in those unprecedented times. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, people either needed a chance to let off steam, a means of expressing defiance or simply something they could lose themselves in to forget about the horrors of the world. With *Toxicity*, System Of A Down provided all three.

It was significant on a cultural level, too. Nu metal had become drunk and bloated on its own success, and its star was waning. While *Toxicity* was far from a nu metal record, it was the last massive-selling album from a band associated with the original scene. Disturbed and Linkin Park would both outstrip it commercially with their respective second albums, *Believe* and *Meteora*, but they were one step behind – System had been in the trenches almost from the start. With *Toxicity*, they killed what they'd helped create.

"Do we even fall in the nu metal category?" says Daron. "I don't think we sound like any of those bands. Personally I think we sound like System Of A Down."

And System Of A Down themselves? *Toxicity* may have unified everyone who heard it – it's a rare metal fan who doesn't love or at least respect the album – but it marked the last time the band that made it truly felt like a unit. *Steal This Album!* (featuring tracks left over from the *Toxicity* sessions, released to foil online pirates), *Mezmerize* and *Hypnotize* were all works of varying greatness, but none of them had *Toxicity*'s sense of purpose. There was nothing like it before, and there's been nothing like it since. Not for System Of A Down and not for anyone.

Another quiet night out with Mudvyane

MUDVAYNE

Prog meets nu metal – and *that* bass riff

BRBR-DENG!!! Ryan Martinie's unfeasibly elasticated bass riff that kicks off Mudvayne's 2000 single *Dig* is up there with Jonathan Davis' cry of *"Are you rrrrready!!!"* and David Draiman's monkey noises in the Nu Metal Hall Of Fame. Since reuniting in 2021 after a decade-long hiatus, Mudvayne's second chapter has arguably been a greater success than their original era. A large part of it is down to the belated viral success of that one song and its earworm intro.

Ironic perhaps, because Mudvayne had to work harder than most first time around to convince people they weren't a joke band. To be fair, their ridiculous stage names and ludicrous bodypainted image didn't help. Guitarist Greg 'Gurrg' Tribbett looked like a giant ladybug and drummer sPaG (aka Matthew McDonough), a mint humbug.

But their debut album *L.D. 50* steamrollered any scepticism. It was prog metal masquerading as nu metal, brute force matched in lockstep by sheer technical chops, while their lyrics swapped angst for Stanley Kubrick and serial killers.

The band sensibly dialled back the OTT image across subsequent albums, drawing the focus to their music. They announced their hiatus in 2010, with Greg Tribbett and singer Chad Grey forming Hellyeah with ex-Pantera drummer Vinnie Paul.

That hiatus dragged on for the rest of the decade, only for Mudvayne to announce their return in 2021 – a rare bright spot amid the desolation of the pandemic. Subsequent tours have proven they're back for good, with the band not ruling out a new album. After all this time, they've finally got the respect they deserved all along.

GETTY/RON GALELLA COLLECTION

THE STORY BEHIND

YOUTH OF THE NATION BY P.O.D.

Inspired by a school shooting and released in the wake of 9/11, nu metal crew P.O.D.'s uplifiting 2001 single was one of the era's great anthems

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY

P.O.D.'S SONNY SANDOVAL was on his way to get coffee when he heard the sirens and saw the police helicopters a couple of blocks away. It was March 5, 2001, his band had been holed up in a studio in their native San Diego, writing songs for the follow-up to 1999's million-selling breakthrough album *The Fundamental Elements Of Southtown*. But the commotion that greeted Sandoval as they headed out for a caffeine fix suggested something was happening on their doorstep – and it wasn't good.

"So we get back to the studio, turn on the TV, and we see the news that there's been a shooting at a school literally two blocks away," says Sandoval. "We just sat there, glued to the TV: 'What the hell is going on?'"

The grim news unfolded: a 15-year-old boy, Charles Andrew Williams, had gone on a shooting spree at the nearby Santana High School, killing two fellow students and wounding 13 other people before being apprehended by police. It was the latest in a depressingly long line of school shootings, the most notorious of which had taken place at Columbine High School in Colorado two years earlier, in which 15 people died.

"Here we were, stuck in the studio, feeling helpless," says Sandoval. "This is our city, we're heartbroken. But then we thought, 'We're musicians, we gotta make a song about it.'"

The track that came out of the tragedy, *Youth Of The Nation*, gave P.O.D. their biggest hit and nu metal one of its most enduring anthems. This atmospheric yet urgent song held a mirror up to American society, asking just what was driving a generation of teenagers to commit harm to themselves and others. But the hope at its core inadvertently provided a glimmer of positivity to a country left shellshocked by the 9/11 terror attacks.

Positivity is what set P.O.D. apart from the nu metal and rap-rock pack – a product of their Christian faith. "We never claimed to be a 'Christian band'," says Sandoval, who embraced religion at 18 after his mother was diagnosed with cancer. "But when I found my faith in Jesus, it was a real experience. For me, it was a case of, 'I want to share this', and music was the universal way to do it."

P.O.D.'s first album, 1994's *Snuff The Punk*, came out the same year as Korn's debut, and Sandoval's band were soon shoehorned into the burgeoning nu metal movement alongside them.

"We got lumped in with Body Count, because we're from the hood and we're a band of colour," says the singer. "Then we got lumped in with Rage Against The Machine. So when the nu metal thing came along, we were just, like, [shrugging] 'OK, cool.'"

The success of *The Fundamental Elements Of Southtown* meant P.O.D. had the wind in their sails when it came to the follow-up. They were already deep into the writing process when the Santana High School shooting took place. It couldn't help but stir memories of the Columbine killings two years earlier. In the wake of that earlier tragedy, they had been invited to Colorado to play what Sandoval calls a "show of healing" organised by students who had survived the massacre. Yet here they were again, history repeating itself in the same senseless fashion.

They sat in the studio in San Diego, watching the news in disbelief. "We were going, 'What's happening with this craziness? What's wrong with the kids today, with the youth of the nation?'" says Sandoval.

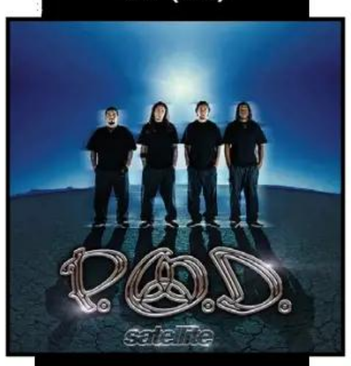
As they talked, guitarist Marcos Curiel began strumming sombre chords. "We just started to jam," says Sandoval. "Just to get out what we were feeling." A vocal hook came to the singer: *'We are, we are… the youth of the nation.'*

THE FACTS

RELEASED:
November 27, 2001

PERSONNEL:
Sonny Sandoval (vocals)
Marcos Curiel (guitar)
Traa Daniels (bass)
Wuv Bernardo (drums)

HIGHEST CHART POSITION:
36 (UK)
28 (US)



GETTY/MARKUS CUFF

P.O.D in 2001: (l–r) Sonny Sandoval, bassist Traa Daniels, guitarist Marcos Curiel, drummer Wuv Bernardo

They began putting meat on the bones of the song, titled *Youth Of The Nation* after that massive hook, as they moved to LA to work on parent album *Satellite* with producer Howard Benson. They knew how they wanted it to sound: heavy but atmospheric, with big timpani drums beating out a martial rhythm. Sandoval's lyrics came late in the process. "The guys hadn't even heard them when I went in and did it," he says. "It was, like, 'Dude, this is a powerful story. We knew we were onto something."

The song's first verse echoed the Santana and Columbine school shootings, telling the story of a similar tragedy through the eyes of a teenage killer's victim. But it shifted to focus on the other problems afflicting the same generation: depression, bullying, anxiety – all viewed with sympathy and without judgment. The introduction of a children's choir near the end of the song kicked it to another emotional level.

The original plan was to use P.O.D. fans to sing on the track. A group of kids were actually in the studio ready to record their parts when the band's attorney called, saying they could be contravening California labour laws. Howard Benson quickly put in a call to a choir director named Bobby Page, who swiftly gathered five boys and five girls to sing on the track.

"We threw a little barbecue, we played them the song, explained it, and they just sang it," says Sandoval, who was reduced to tears during the performance. "It was a beautiful moment. We've run into adults on the road and they've gone, 'Hey man, I was one of the kids in that choir!'"

THE FIRST SINGLE from Satellite, uplifting mosh pit anthem *Alive*, hit No.2 on US Alternative Radio when it was released in July 2001, ramping up expectation. The album itself was scheduled for release on September 11, 2001. "We had stickers and beach balls saying, 'P.O.D.'s *Satellite*… 9/11'," recalls Sonny. "We played [starmaking MTV show] *TRL* four days earlier in Battery Park, not far from the Twin Towers."

P.O.D were back in California when the planes struck the World Trade Center on the morning of September 11. They were supposed to play a release show in Hollywood that evening, but the gig was pulled in the wake of the attacks. "Everything just stopped," says Sonny. "Our record didn't matter at that point. It was just about being there for each other, and being there for the world if we needed to be."

Exactly a week after the 9/11 attacks, *Satellite* entered the Billboard charts at No.6. Music gave people something to cling to amid the waves of grief and chaos, but P.O.D. offered something more than blind patriotism or raw rage. "Big time," says Sonny. "We're this band from Southtown, Californian, saying, 'Man, I am so happy to be alive, I am grateful for every single breath I take.'"

That aura of positivity hadn't faded by the time *Youth Of The Nation* was released as a single that November. It may have been inspired by an entirely different tragedy, but the opening ▶

"P.O.D. NEVER CLAIMED TO BE A 'CHRISTIAN BAND'"

SONNY SANDOVAL

"WE HAD STICKERS SAYING, 'P.O.D.'S SATELLITE... 9/11'"

SONNY SANDOVAL

lines could have been written about 9/11: *'Last day of the rest of my life/I wish I would've known cos I didn't kiss my momma goodbye.'*

Still, the video made the song's subject clear. A mini-movie featuring a group of disaffected teens taking a literal and symbolic road trip across America that starts in bleak black-and-white and ends in hopeful colour was cut in with footage of the band performing in front of a wall covered in high school yearbook photos.

"They were random photos we pulled out," says Sonny. "We had to blur and rip the photos for because of copyright, but it gave it a more eerie feeling. We were saying, 'There's no colour, there's no race, there's no religion... these are human beings, they could be your kids."

Youth Of The Nation reached No.28 in the US and gave them a Top 40 hit in the UK. It was nominated for a Grammy for Best Hard Rock Performance in 2003, losing to Foo Fighters' *All My Life*. It also received the pop-culture equivalent of a papal blessing when it was spoofed by Weird Al Yankovic as part of his 2003 single *Angry White Boy Polka* – one of the biggest compliments any band can receive. "Come on, it's Weird Al," laughs Sonny. "That's so cool."

Today, *Youth Of The Nation* is P.O.D.'s most streamed song and the one they've played live more than any other. "We played some huge festival and all these younger bands were watching us – Underoath, Of Mice And Men, We Came As Romans," says Sandoval. "When we finished, they went, 'Dude, when you play that song anywhere in the world, does it go off like that?' And we were, like, 'You know what? It does.'"

While the song's impact hasn't abated, neither have the events that inspired it. There have been more than 120 separate fatal school shootings in the USA since 2000, with more than 300 people killed in total.

"I look into the eyes of young people and there's still a disconnect – there's tragedy, there's hurt," says Sandoval. "For me being a man of faith, I believe there's a disconnect between people and God. But that's the message of a song like *Youth Of The Nation*: we're here, we believe in each other, we're gonna make it."

GETTY/STEVE GRANITZ

Sonny leads the band on an MTV Special.

SPINESHANK

More than just Fear Factory Jr.

PROTÉGÉS OF FEAR Factory's Dino Cazares, LA's Spineshank seemed to be everywhere at the start of the 00s. Touring relentlessly and acquiring plenty of TV time thanks to the videos for *Synthetic* and *New Disease*, Spineshank's blend of industrial crunch and nu metal sheen was a winning combination.

They'd formed in the middle of the previous decade, inspired by both Fear Factory's groundbreaking *Demanufacture* album and the nascent nu metal scene happening on their doorstep. They swiftly bagged a deal with Roadrunner. Their 1998 album *Strictly Diesel* featured a guest appearance from FF singer Burton C Bell, but they were so much more than a baby Fear Factory – the electronic textures that peppered standout tracks *Stovebolt* and *Shinebox* owed more to 80s synth pop than industrial music and Jonny Santos had nu metal's patented moan-growl locked in.

Strictly Diesel put Spineshank on the map, but it was 2000's follow-up – *The Height Of Callousness* – that saw them realising their potential. Pounding club favourite *Synthetic* was the killer track, but the rest of the album refined and bettered what they'd achieved on its predecessor. Their third album *Self-Destructive Pattern* bagged a Grammy nomination for the song *Smothered*, but the deserved breakthrough never materialised.

Santos bailed in 2004, and the band limped on without him before a reunion resulted in 2012's *Anger Denial Acceptance*. By 2016 it had died down again. But nothing ever truly dies when it comes to nu metal, and by the time you read this, they may be back together for a third shot at fame.

Diesel power: Spineshank back in the days of Callousness

PRESS

THE HAMMER INTERVIEW

ROSS ROBINSON

He's the super-producer and 'Godfather Of Nu Metal' who got the likes of Korn and Slipknot to bare their souls on record. And it's all thanks to wine, self-help… and skunks?!

WORDS: ELEANOR GOODMAN • PICTURES: SIMONE NOBLE

ROSS ROBINSON

As the producer for Korn, Limp Bizkit and Slipknot's debut albums, Ross Robinson defined what would come to be known as nu metal, wringing emotionally and sonically heavy performances out of the bands. He had discovered music at age six, and says he and his younger sister would sit around drinking wine and listening to his uncle's Led Zeppelin record.

"We'd play *Black Dog* over and over and over. I remember doing this a lot – the same record, wine and feeling this insane, incredible, mystic thing of partying with my sister, ha ha ha!" he recalls. "Where were our parents? It was the 70s, do I have to say more?"

That interest snowballed, leading to his bands Détente and Murdercar, and a stint working at the studio of W.A.S.P.'s Blackie Lawless. But it was Korn's 1994 self-titled first record that lit the fuse on his career. Using skills learned from workshops run by his mother, Byron Katie, who devised a method of therapy called 'The Work', he helped them access their deepest feelings. He's produced Machine Head, Sepultura, Glassjaw, At The Drive-In, Suicide Silence and more, and still works with heavy bands today. This is his story. Are… you… ready?

You were born in 1967. What's your earliest memory?
"Looking in the mirror, and seeing my face for the first time, and just staring at it and thinking, 'I'm not supposed to look like that, not me.' Ha ha ha! Everybody thought I was the cutest kid ever, but it didn't make sense, so that was pretty heavy."

Yeah, why did you feel that way?
"I think because when you're attaching yourself, your memory has to start somewhere. There was no prior story to what I looked like, so it was a brand new experience that I couldn't attach to. So the first time I saw my face, it had no reference."

What was your home life like in Needles, California?
"Around age seven, I got a dirt bike, and I was allowed to take off into the open desert. My mom used to hand me a book of matches and say, 'If you get hurt, or need help, light a fire and we'll find you,' ha ha ha! So, I'd just take off, and I'd run out of gas out there and struggle pushing my bike back home.

"On the Colorado River, there were boats and frogs and fish and wildlife and the smell of the water, and my parents started a contracting business the year I was born, and it was thriving. So, there was this thing where we were semi-big fish in a pond, and I had this really amazing sense of self-worth and wellbeing and connection to nature and all of that; it was spectacular. But my parents fought, and my mom took us away, and I didn't like that. We moved to Vegas when I was in the third grade, and I was super-, super-resistant. Our dog disappeared and died in the desert somewhere."

How did you cope in the long run?
"Basically, my 'ism' is an eating disorder and self-image, and that relates back to the mirror thing. So it is a good drug of choice, because I chose sprouts and wheatgrass and health and, 'Don't I look great? Aren't I a great person because of what I eat?' – a vegan in the late 80s, early 90s, it was really extreme. The eating disorder took over my life, and during Korn rehearsals, through all the demos, auditioning Jonathan, and that whole thing right before they were signed, was when I had my deep, deep spiritual awakening."

When did you start playing music?
"My mum married and my stepdad was a construction worker, and he was retired and he loved taking us to the races. So my whole identity was all motocross, motocross, motocross – it was all I cared about, it was all I thought about, and I got hurt really bad, gashed out my leg, and they said it was 400 stitches to repair it. Then I started racing again and I broke my leg, and my mom was like, 'That's it!' Ha ha! The doctor told me my leg wasn't gonna grow, but luckily it did.

"Missing my dirtbike, I had a dream about a guitar. It was just as cool, and I became obsessed with it, and started taking lessons. I was going to go to an Ozzy concert, and Randy Rhoads died [in March 1982] two weeks before I was gonna see him."

You used to play in the bands Détente and Murdercar. What made you realise that production was for you instead of playing?
"In Détente, we had a record producer, Dana Strum. He was the bass player and producer of Slaughter, and he was my next-door neighbour's boyfriend. Détente got a record deal with Roadrunner, who were only in Europe at the time, and they licensed us to Metal Blade in the US. So, Dana produced the record [1986's *Recognize No Authority*]. I started working for him after, and I fell in love with the studio; it was like, 'Oh my God.' Not only do you get to be in the band you're in, you get to be in all these other bands."

"THE DOCTOR TOLD ME MY LEG WOULDN'T GROW"

The first record you produced was Fear Factory's *Concrete* in 1991, but then they re-recorded it. Was that disappointing for you?
"It was absolutely crushing, and it was probably one of the catalysts for falling into the depths of the eating disorder, because I had so much hatred inside of me for those guys. It was absolutely 'How could they?'"

Your mum, Byron Katie, referred herself to a counselling centre when you were 19, and then became a self-help author. What impact did that have on you?
"Well, before we did the first Korn record, to survive, I would go help her with her early workshops, and I was in charge of the cleanses. So I would give people psyllium and bentonite and their herbs, green algae, and she did 'The Work' with them. And that was in a place called Tecopa, California, near Death Valley. It's a hot spring that they say is the third most healing waters on the planet."

How have her motivational teachings impacted you?
"I was one person before doing these workshops with her, and we were doing Korn rehearsals – it was the demo stage, where they were on to people coming to the shows, and things were heating up a little bit – and I remember [guitarist] Brian 'Head' from Korn told me this awesome line. I said, 'OK, I gotta go do a nine-day workshop,' and he goes, 'Oh, man, don't come back all weird again!' Ha ha ha! I kept coming back all weird, so it allowed me to see my character defects and allowed me to see where I'm in the wrong, and it allowed me to become a record producer that goes for the heart."

What happened to you at the workshops?
"One example was this person was honking and honking and honking, and I was getting cash out of a cash machine, and I'm like, 'Oh, that's interesting.' And I'm feeling connected, and really aware, and this guy gets out of the truck, and he's like, 'Who's the fucking asshole who parked here like that?' And I turned around, and I go, 'Oh, that was me.' He goes, 'Well, you're an asshole.' He thought I was gonna fight him, and I go, 'I care about you so much and I want you to have a great day', and gave him this massive

Ross Robinson: the big name behind so many awesome albums

hug. That's the difference between before the workshops and after. It gave me a true courage to be able to face the heart rather than the obvious war."

What state of mind were you in when you were working on that first Korn record in 1994?
"My tool was to go into the bathroom at Indigo Ranch [Studios in Malibu], put my head on the floor and ask nothingness for help, and I didn't know what God was or anything like that. 'I don't know what I'm doing, whatever it is, I'm here for whatever's supposed to be, please help.' And then I would stay until my body was overwhelmed with those chills, and it'd be like [sharply inhales]. I'd walk out and answers came. It gave me a sense of eternal knowing that wasn't tapped into before. The main thing was love; love for them, love for myself, self-nurturing."

The song *Daddy* is so emotional. How did you get Jonathan to deliver that performance?
"I just went up to him and held his arms, looked straight in his eyes and said, 'You need to do it,' and he goes, 'I know,' and that was it. And I still, to this day, haven't been able to get that deep of a performance from anybody. His heart was exploding, and I think we made musical history."

Did it feel groundbreaking to have that kind of raw emotion in metal?
"Yeah, and you have to remember, too, I was in these workshops where the norm was people talking about losing their children, divorce, cancer, death. I was in that forbidden zone space with people that were in their 40s and 50s, cleaning out their garbage and their lives and their heads and their souls, so it was like, 'Yes.' Sometimes, my mom will play that song in her workshops. It blows people's heads off, crazy."

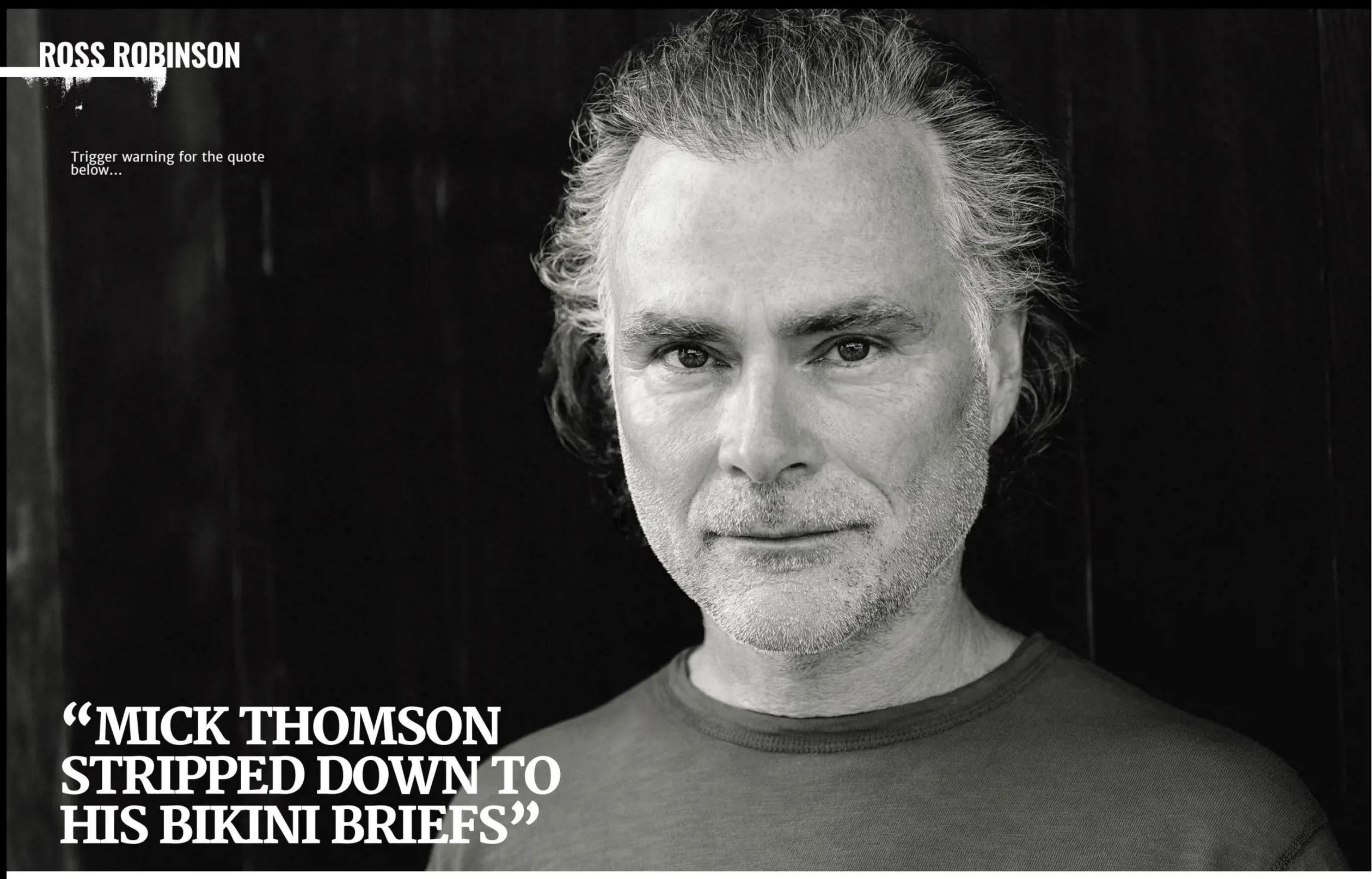
You also worked with Limp Bizkit. What was Fred Durst like in 1997?
"He's probably the most charming person I've ever met. When Korn went through Jacksonville, Fred got my number, my address, and he sent me a cassette. I called up Fieldy, like, 'Dude, why'd you give that guy my number? He keeps leaving me messages.' I was really annoyed with it, and then my girlfriend listened to it and she goes, 'This is really good.' And I listen to it, and I remember like, 'Oh my God, this is really good.' And so I gave it to my manager, and we got it a record deal instantly.

"Fred, being the entrepreneur, convinced us it wasn't good enough yet, got out of that record deal, and got another record deal. And then during the album, he wanted to be on Interscope, so the guy who did the deal before Interscope had to do a deal with Interscope. So he's like a mega-businessman and just a kid."

You were with Slipknot from the first record in 1999. How did you react when you heard them for the first time?
"The first demo I didn't really like and it kind of sat there. Then, their acting manager, at the time, worked at a radio station in Iowa. She was a programmer, and she only knew one person in LA to try to get it signed, and she goes, 'Do you know how to get a hold of Ross Robinson?' And he goes, 'I do, because I manage him.'

"We flew out to Iowa straight away and we go to Clown's house. They're rehearsing and they didn't have masks on. I remember Corey's face, so fucking animated and awesome.

"They played the next night, and [at first] I was like, 'Oh, man, the mask is not relating like it was in the rehearsal room. His eyes and his face were so cool, this isn't as good.' [But] with the masks, the performance was fucking insane;



Trigger warning for the quote below...

"MICK THOMSON STRIPPED DOWN TO HIS BIKINI BRIEFS"

people were just killin' each other inside the club, and the smile on my face was indescribable. I think the masks allowed 'em to become something other than their egoic self; they were able to let all of their identity go and become something else that they couldn't be otherwise."

How integrated into Slipknot were you back then? Did they see you as a friend or as an outsider?
"Well, after that show, we all hung out and fell in love and were inseparable. They were my response to everything that was just blowing up. I think [Limp Bizkit's] *Nookie* was out and Korn had massive success without me, and I wasn't a part of that; I was kind of pushed out, for some reason. So, I was like, 'This is what I feel like,' and they were like, 'That's what we feel like, too.' They knew what they were, and I knew what they were, and it was something to wipe the slate clean and start over, and 'Here it comes, *here comes the pain*', ha ha ha!"

On tour, people talked about how Clown liked shitting onstage, and they had a jar for vomiting – did any of that make it into the studio?
"No, zero. That's a lot of free time on your hands, on the road, and boredom. For us, we were slamming, slamming, slamming. There was a time where skunks were coming around Indigo, 'cos it was up in the mountains in Malibu, and I told Mick [Thomson, guitar], 'Dude, if you catch one of those skunks, and give it a death growl right in its face, I'll give you two hundred bucks.' He stripped all the way down to his black bikini briefs, he looked like [something out of] *Metalocalypse*, looking for this skunk underneath a trailer that they'd hang out in, but he never got it. He turned out OK, he got plenty of money! Ha ha ha!"

You do have a reputation for pushing people's emotional buttons. Have you ever worried that you've gone too far?
"Yeah – there's that record, *Korn III* [*Remember Who You Are*, 2010]. I was pushing way too far, and it had the opposite effect, and I learned so much what not to do. Jonathan's done interviews about, 'I'll never work with Ross again. I love him, but, you know…' and I was like, 'Oh, man, what did I do?'

"Basically, I know what I did, and I kind of did it on The Cure [their 2004 self-titled] record as well, where I wanted The Cure to be in the 70s or 1982's *Pornography*, and Robert Smith's in his mid-to-late 40s, and then there's me pushing this sub-personality on him, like [makes loud roaring sound] not letting anything go by, and I feel like he's saying, 'Too loud' on that record.

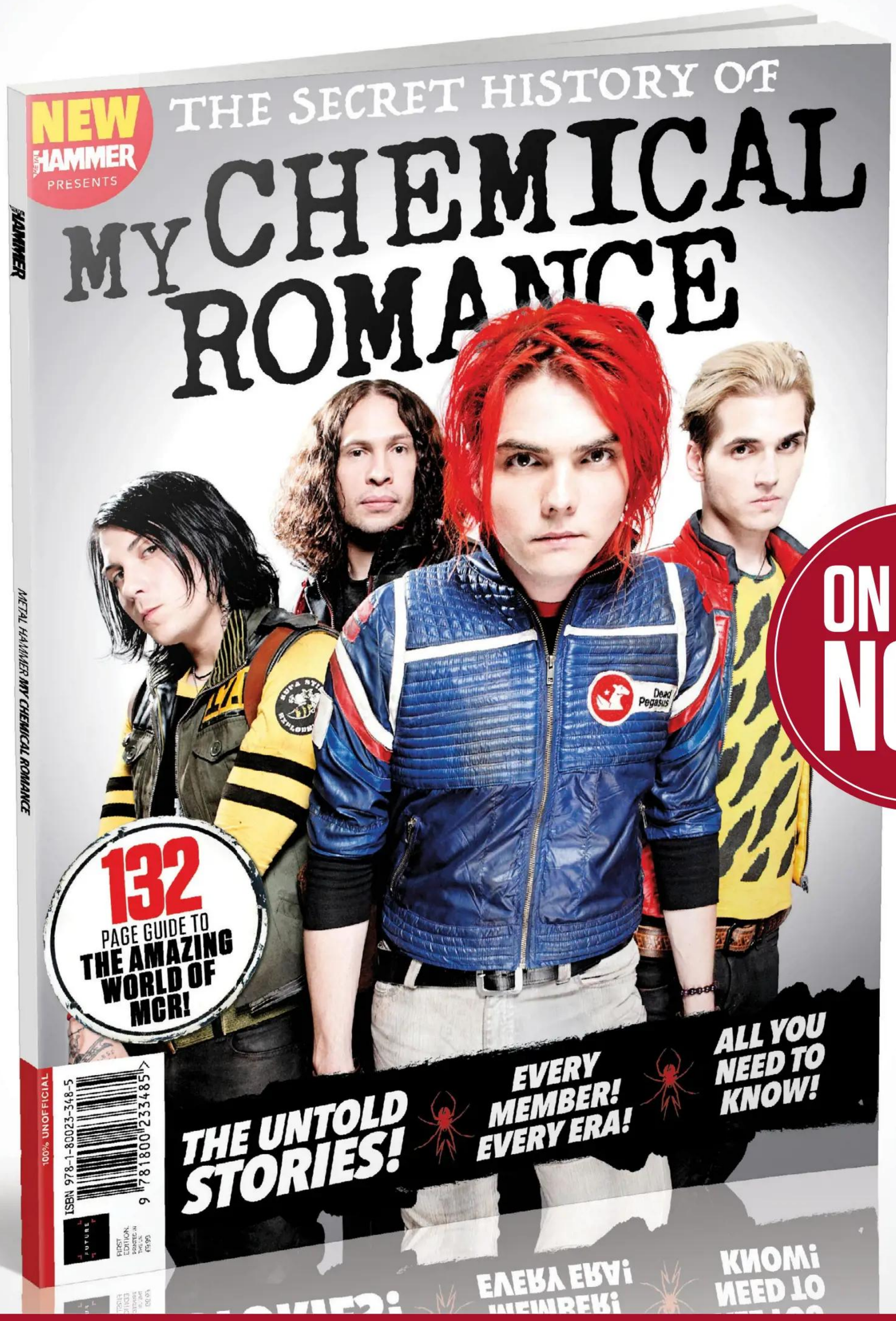
"I want you to be you today, and not try to repeat some fantasy of the past that I have in my frickin' head, like, 'This is what I crave, I know these guys better than they do.' No, I don't, I don't know anything. But I do deeply, deeply know to absolutely respect the artist and what they are now. It's funny, 'cos the album's called *Remember Who You Are*, ha ha ha! And I had no fucking idea, Jesus, God."

Eric Whitney, aka Ghostmane, told us that you made him cry because he was doing a song about his father…
"Ha ha ha! See, that's the thing, I allowed him, and was there for that sweetheart to come through and not be held back. When somebody lets themselves be authentic all the way to the core, the body can't handle it and it comes out as tears and love. Everybody says, 'Ross made you cry' – no, man, it's not that at all, it's not violent, it's the absolute opposite. It's violent to hold back. Let's fucking go there, do it, just once, and it'll last forever and ever and ever, it'll keep playing at that same level of intensity. It won't stop giving."

How do you feel about being called 'The Godfather Of Nu Metal'?
"I was extremely resistant to it when they started doing it during the Glassjaw days. I didn't wanna be lumped in with all of the followers and the scene of silliness that happened afterwards, and I had a problem with that. Now, I think it's sweet. If people wanna call me that, good."

THE UNDILUTED STORY OF ONE OF ROCK'S MOST ICONIC BANDS

Covering every album, every line-up, every controversy and every story, this is the ultimate guide to MCR. From the Attic Demos and The Black Parade to reunions and rivalries, this book has it all.



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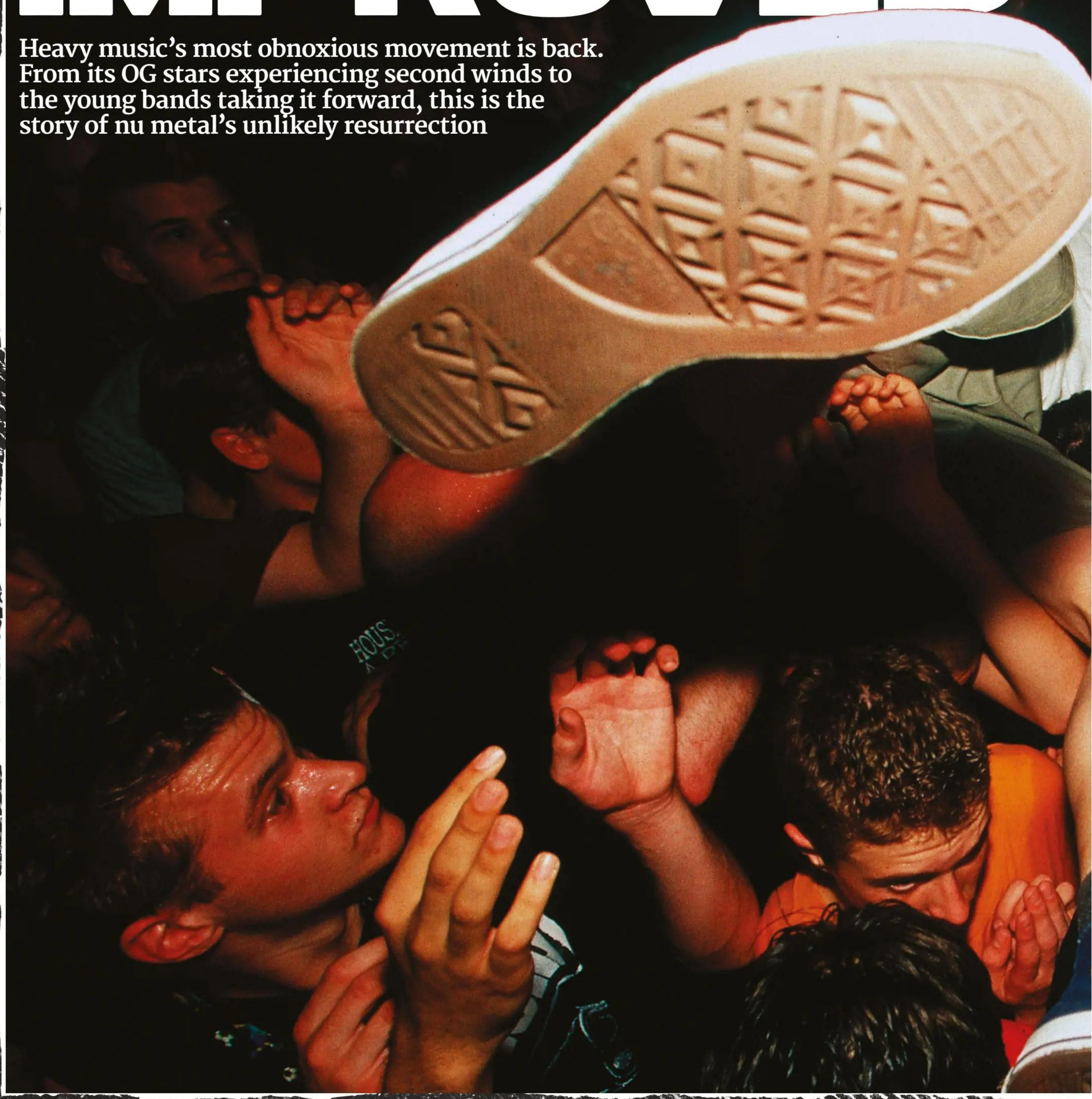
nu AND IMPROVED

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS

Heavy music's most obnoxious movement is back. From its OG stars experiencing second winds to the young bands taking it forward, this is the story of nu metal's unlikely resurrection



GETTY

You can always pinpoint the moment a rumble underfoot becomes a movement. This year, it happened on Saturday July 31, at 6.30pm, at Chicago's Lollapalooza Festival.

"Let me make this clear," drawled Limp Bizkit frontman Fred Durst, addressing a huge crowd, dressed like an extra from *Starsky & Hutch* in 100% polyester, complete with red aviators, a grey mop and a handlebar moustache. "This is not Woodstock '99."

It wasn't. But as a vitriolic *Break Stuff* kicked off a pit of moshers that probably weren't even born when it was initially released as a single from 1999's *Significant Other* album,, it might as well have been. The streamed set went viral with Fred's 'Dad Vibes' look breaking the internet, causing the band's song sales to double and brewing a feverish buzz around the band's most recent album *Still Sucks*, their first since 2011's *Gold Cobra*, which dropped on Halloween 2021. For the first time in forever, a hype had descended on Bizkit that was heavier than mere nostalgia. It was solid proof that nu metal was back.

Really, it was inevitable. Here at *Hammer* we've been banging on about the nu metal revival for the last five years, as we watched bands such as Loathe, Northlane, Cane Hill and Vein tap into its swaggering bounce and downtuned aggression. But it's only now it feels like we're properly living in a renaissance, one where the genre's past and present has coalesced into a new wave that is reconfiguring its legacy.

While stalwarts Korn, Papa Roach and Disturbed have continued to enjoy enduring success, in April 2021, veterans Mudvayne announced they were reforming after an 11-year hiatus and playing a slew of major US festivals. For better or worse, Y2K fashion has started making a comeback, with wallet chains, *Matrix*-style PVC trench coats and path-sweeping trousers appearing in mainstream stores. And most importantly, we can hear nu metal's influence running rampant among young bands and artists.

Spiritbox's big break came with nu metal-influenced rager *Holy Roller*, while Code Orange's recent face-kicker, *Out For Blood*, channels nu metal's lost gem, *Across The Nation* by the Union Underground, and sounds like a Wrestlemania theme song to boot. Meanwhile, from Tetrarch to Wargasm, Tallah to Employed To Serve, to Poppy and Nova Twins, a diverse range of artists across the metal spectrum are binning off the original wave's misogynistic, white-bro hubris for something that pushes the genre forward.

"It's cool to hear some of those elements creeping back into the music – it legitimises us even more," says Papa Roach vocalist Jacoby Shaddix, who, last year, teamed up with TikTok creator and rapper Jeris Johnson on a remix of nu metal classic *Last Resort*. To date, the collab has been viewed more than 7 million times on Youtube, introducing the track to a brand new audience. "I look back on nu metal fondly now, because back in the day I was like, 'Fuck nu metal, that shit is dead.' Now I'm like, 'Fuck yeah. I was one of the OGs!' We were creating something, a sound that was new and unique and that's fucking dope. I am so grateful to be part of that story."

"People who were kids when it was blowing up are starting to peak in their band careers," says Tetrarch's lead guitarist, Diamond Rowe. Last year the Atlantans released their second album, *Unstable*, which put a modern, metallic spin on the nu metal template and saw them emerge as the leaders of the Nu Wave Of Nu Metal. "Bands are finding again the value in melody, big choruses and dynamics in music, and when you look back at some of the biggest bands to do that, they came out of that nu metal era with your Disturbeds and your Linkin Parks. You can talk as much shit about them as you possibly want, but at the end of the day, you can't deny these bands were huge and they were huge for a reason."

Remixed Roach: Jacoby Shaddix and Jeris Johnson have introduced *Last Resort* to a new audience

That old guard has continued to be a huge live draw. "I do a lot of surveying with our festival fanbase," explains festival owner and booker Danny Wimmer, who last year booked Mudvayne to play Danny Wimmer Presents (DWP) festivals across the US, including a headline slot at Inkcarceration Music And Tattoo Festival in Ohio. "Mudvayne kept coming up, year after year, as a reunion that the fans wanted to see."

While the *Dig* creators don't inspire quite the same level of fanaticism over here in Europe, the announcement of their resurrection sparked a metal Twitter meltdown in the US, with Inkcarceration selling out three weeks after the headline announcement – no mean feat in the age of Covid.

"The research said to us they were ready in this market to be a headliner," Danny continues. "I knew there was so much momentum. This was the first bite of the apple to help position them so, when they came back in 2022 for their headline tour, they would be positioned right."

While, unsurprisingly, festival line-ups tend to be a numbers game, for Danny, the return of Limp Bizkit and Mudvayne signals something bigger than legacy bands shifting tickets by resting on past success. "This isn't a nostalgia play, it feels right," he continues, noting the relevance of nu metal within current pop culture discourse. "You don't see a lot of bands writing Poison songs today. But with nu metal, you can hear it and you can feel the tones of that genre in current bands."

Two decades on from its initial reign and given the amount of derision that's been thrown its way since, it's easy to forget just how big a deal nu metal actually was. Reaching across pop, rock, metal and hip hop, from 1997-2003 it seeped into every aspect of mainstream culture.

PAPA ROACH: PRESS/STEPHANIE MOSER

Tetrarch: leaders of the Nu Wave Of Nu Metal

Limp Bizkit: Dad Vibes FTW

"BACK IN THE DAY, I WAS LIKE, 'FUCK NU METAL!'"

JACOBY SHADDIX, PAPA ROACH

"As goofy as some of the styles were, it was something people could latch on to," says Diamond. "I know your average metal fan would be like, 'UUURGH that's so lame that my rap friend likes this', but I think that's super-cool. And that's why those bands are still so huge and they're still gaining fans every day."

In 2000, Eminem's *The Real Slim Shady* name-dropped Fred Durst in the same breath as Christina Aguilera. Later that year, Bizkit's *Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water* sold more than a million copies in its first week of release, with a launch party at the Playboy Mansion. Within 18 months, it had shiufted over six million copies in the US alone.

Now nu metal is bubbling up into the mainstream all over again, in the music of artists – many of whom are women ▶

TETRARCH: PRESS/JEREMY SAFFER. LIMP BIZKIT: GETTY.

nu world ORDER

Ten modern-day nu metal bangers that prove the genre is in rude health again

TETRARCH
I'm Not Right
The lead single from last year's excellent *Unstable* album helped install Tetrarch as commanders-in-chief of the nu metal resurgence. Channelling the likes of Adema, Spineshank and *Untouchables*-era Korn, it was instant metal club dancefloor fodder.

SPIRITBOX
Hurt You
While Spiritbox's debut album, *Eternal Blue*, was a gorgeous amalgamation of a whole host of influences, second track *Hurt You* hangs around a riff taken straight out of the Head and Munky playbook, layering it with sumptuous electronics and a djenty underbelly.

TALLAH
No One Should Read This
Built off a carefully crafted horror concept and stacked with groove and swagger, 2020's *Matriphagy* was a smorgasbord of classic nu metal references. Mudvayne, Coal Chamber and Slipknot loom large on this rager.

BLIND CHANNEL
Dark Side
Måneskin may have stolen the headlines at last year's Eurovision, but nu metal Finns Blind Channel gave a pretty good account of themselves, too – so much so, that this anthemic call to arms has ended up amassing more than 45 million streams on Spotify.

DEATH BLOOMS
Life Is Pain
Despite the songtitle, 2021 was actually pretty good to Death Blooms – they released their debut album to solid reviews and became the first band to play at Castle Donington in two years when they got to open up Download Pilot in June. Not bad at all!

WARGASM
Spit
One of the UK's fastest-rising rock bands, Wargasm's mix of bouncy nu metal and snotty riot grrrl punk has seen them nab tour and festival slots all over the joint. Propulsive, danceable breakthrough single *Spit* remains their finest moment so far.

NOVA TWINS
Taxi
2020's *Who Are The Girls?* was one of that year's most raved-about debuts, and it's easy to see why given Nova Twins' irresistible blend of rock, metal, grime and dance. This bopper mixes funky percussion, sweeping electronics and, of course, big fat riffs.

RINA SAWAYAMA
STFU!
Proving that nu metal's resurrection has spread well beyond the rock scene, the London-based, genre-splicing alternative pop star utilised turn-of-the-century metal riffs to propel this standout single from her brilliant sophomore record, *Sawayama*.

CODE ORANGE
Out For Blood
Alright, so nu metal's influence on Code Orange thus far has been mostly fleeting, but there's a huge, turn-of-the-century vibe to this industrialised metal club crusher-in-waiting. Yes, it sounds a bit like Powerman 5000. And yes, that's just fine.

BLACK COAST
Ache
Nu on the scene (sorry) but making some significant strides in the underground, this British five-piece blend a perfect mixture of Korn, Linkin Park and Deftones and inject it with that extra dose of early-00s angst that was once a mainstream metal staple.

Blind Channel: bowled over by the Dark Side

– as diverse as rapper Bree Runway, pop superstar Rina Sawayama, and futuristic genre-mashers Grimes and Poppy, forcing nu metal into the ears of a brand-new generation of fans who are discovering it for the first time.

And it doesn't get much more mainstream than Eurovision. Last year rock crashed Europe's annual dairy-fest, with Italian retro-rockers Måneskin seizing the crown. Most surprising, though, were Finnish lifelong nu metal fans Blind Channel, whose raging, Linkin Park-indebted entry, *Dark Side*, ended up taking sixth place. "We were born and raised with nu metal. Seeing Linkin Park and Limp Bizkit on the television was the start of the musical experience for us," says vocalist and guitarist Joel Hokka.

"For the past couple of years, we've been a big thing on the Finnish rock scene," continues co-vocalist Niko Moilanen. "But there were times when everybody would say, 'You've got to stop that rapping thing, that ain't cool.' Even the big major labels in Finland said that. We said, 'Fuck no.' Nu metal is the coolest thing ever, we should just stick to our vision."

It's paid off. With more than 45 million streams, *Dark Side* was the third most streamed song of all 2021's Eurovision entries. And with their fame having rocketed internationally since the contest, and a deal with Century Media in the bag, Joel and Niko now speak with and exude the kind of unshakeable confidence that made the titans of nu metal such enduring superstars.

"IF WE'RE HATED BUT SUCCESSFUL, THEN HATE US!"

NIKO MOILANEN, BLIND CHANNEL

"We're not shy about it, we wanted to hit the fucking mainstream," continues Niko. "If that means being hated but being super-, super-successful then go on. Fucking hate us. We don't care. We're going to do exactly what we have always done."

With a new crop of artists flying the flag, the likes of Blind Channel, Wargasm and Tetrarch have found themselves as gateway bands for young fans to discover the juggernauts of the genre. "My youngest brother was born in 2005 and after *Dark Side* he's slowly realising his big brother is actually

Danny Wimmer: festival organiser and nu metal supporter

BLIND CHANNEL: PRESS/YLE/MONA SALMINEN. DANNY WIMMER: PRESS/SAM SHAPIRO

becoming a rock star," says Joel. "He asked me, 'What is that Linkin Park song you mentioned? My friends are listening to it all the time.'"

The impact is being felt at the top of the festival bills. "When a genre gets so mainstream like hip hop and dance, you need an outlet," says Danny Wimmer, who's noticed that nu metal bands such as Korn, Mudvayne and Slipknot, who all played at 2021's DWP festivals, are attracting a younger audience.

"Sometimes cool can eat itself," he adds, noting that society at large seems hungry for a taste of counterculture. "Here in the States, you're seeing more metal t-shirts in a mainstream outlet store than you're seeing in any genre. They're impacting the youth. They might not know their music, but they're going, 'There's something cool about that that's cooler than me wearing a Travis Scott t-shirt.'"

In the end (no pun intended) though, what's kept nu metal alive is the songs. Gargantuan anthems that continue to resonate and start pits decade after decade.

"There's multi-levels to *Last Resort* that makes it connect," says Jacoby Shaddix. "There's the surface level, where you can rock out to it in the gym, or you can be at a party and turn up to it. But then you dig in deeper and it's talking about some really traumatic shit. But the fucking riff, dude, though! That riff, every kid wants to play that on guitar. They love it, they won't stop and I'm not mad about it."

"When you hear *Rollin'* or *Got The Life* in any setting today, people go crazy," adds Danny. "It really is one of the last times we had a moment. A true moment that had a name attached to it. A lot of these nu metal acts you're talking about are just incredible live performers. They're really the last of the rock'n'roll, bigger-than-life spirits."

ILL NIÑO

Nu metal's Latin-American massive

CRITICS OF NU METAL who wrote it off as white frat-boy music missed the cultural diversity that bubbled just below the scene's surface. Ill Niño are a case in point. They formed in New Jersey at the end of the 90s, but they fused the South American heritage of Brazilian-born singer Cristian Machado and Peruvian American drummer Dave Chavarri into their music.

That blend was never more perfectly achieved on the band's 2001 debut album *Revolution Revolución*, which saw Ill Niño mixing Soulfly-esque groove metal and inventive percussion with a melodic deftness that was the equal of band-of-the-moment, Linkin Park. The result was a unique spin on the genre, and *Revolution Revolución* placed Ill Niño squarely in the middle of nu metal's second-generation pack.

The collapse of the scene post-2003 inevitably impacted on their profile, but unlike many of their contemporaries, they never split up. Instead, they weathered the storm, releasing a string of albums that played to the faithful, the latest of which – *Till Death, La Familia* – was released in 2014.

Ultimately, Ill Niño were their own worst enemies. In 2019, just as the nu metal revival began to appear, Chavarri announced that half of the band – including Cristian Machado – had quit. Machado denied this and filed a lawsuit against the drummer. A settlement then resulted in Chavarri retaining the rights to the band name.

Ill Niño are still a going concern, though the album that Chavarri has recorded with a reconfigured line-up has yet to emerge – a frustrating state of affairs for one of nu metal's most under-appreciated bands.

GETTY/ANNAMARIA DISANTO

Coming around again: Ill Niño in Los Angeles

THE 50 GREATEST NU METAL ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

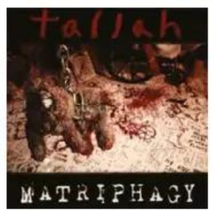
Landmark debuts, game-changing blockbusters, cult classics and next-gen ragers: these are the ultimate nu metal albums

WORDS: ADAM BRENNAN, CHRIS CHANTLER, HYWEL DAVIES, MALCOLM DOME, DAVE EVERLEY, ELEANOR GOODMAN, STEPHEN HILL, RICH HOBSON, MATT MILLS, JONATHAN SELZER, KEVIN STEWART-PANKO, PAUL TRAVERS

50 ULTRASPANK
PROGRESS (2000)

Santa Barbara's Ultraspank had a lot going for them: a deal with major label Epic, a frontman in Pete Murray who had the whole hunched-over angst thing nailed down and, on their second album *Progress*, an-of-the-moment sound that wove together nu metal, industrial and electronic music. But the world remained immune to their charms, and they split soon afterwards, leaving them as one of the scene's great 'What ifs?"

49 TALLAH
MATRIPHAGY (2020)



The face of nu metal in the 2020s is a grotesque one, if the genre-disfiguring Philadelphia outfit masterminded by drummer Max Portnoy (son of Dream Theater's Mike), are any measure. Embellishing chaotic tales with venomous raps and despairing clean vocals courtesy of singer/sometime YouTuber) Justin Bonitz, *Matriphagy* paints gruesome pictures you can't tear yourself away from, picking up where Korn's self-titled debut left off all those years ago.

48 TAPROOT
GIFT (2000)

The only nu metal band to take their name from a Neil Diamond album (*Taproot Manuscript*, since you ask), Michigan's Taproot leaned heavily on the Korn-style clacky bass and angsty vocals on their third album and major label debut. But what they lacked in uniqueness, they made up for in an ability to hit the sweet spot that every nu metal kid wanted to hear in the year 2000.

47 SPINESHANK
THE HEIGHT OF CALLOUSNESS (2000)

Fuelled by a whirlwind of energy, a masterful production job from Garth Richardson, and Jonny Santos's incredible vocals, Spineshank were one of nu metal's all-time great rock club floorfillers. Electronic soundscapes, the classic stomp-and-groove combination and choruses that last for days (even if you think you don't know *Synthetic*, you do), *The Height Of Callousness* is a tour de force from front to back.

46 SEVENDUST
ANOMOSITY (2001)

Anomisity might have opened with a track called *Tits On A Boar*, but by-and-large Sevendust weren't given to the daftness that cluttered the lower ends of the genre. If anything, for a while it looked like they were going to be massive – they even rang in the new millennium by supporting Metallica in December 1999. Sadly it wasn't meant to be, but *Anomisity* still slays with its combination of soulful vocal melodies and stabbing staccato riffs.

45 CHIMAIRA
THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF REASON (2003)

There was a fine line between nu metal and parts of the New Wave Of American Heavy Metal that followed, and Chimaira had a foot in both camps. The Cleveland outfit delivered one of the definitive albums of 2003, a pummelling mixture of groove metal clobber, thrashy hooks and nu metal swagger. Chimaira may have become metal's ultimate Nearly Band, but this was still a post-millennial classic.

44 COAL CHAMBER
CHAMBER MUSIC (1999)

Crucified in the press at the time as a pallid follow-up to their landmark debut, Coal Chamber's second album *Chamber Music* is way better than legend has it. Dez Fafara and co stripped away the cartoon elements of their sound (and their look) and delivered something altogether darker, stranger and more gothic. That Ozzy-assisted cover of Peter Gabriel's *Shock The Monkey* still sucks the big one though.

43 (HED)PE
(HED)PE (1997)

Fuelled by a whirlwind of swaggering street attitude and on-point musical chops, LA's (hed)pe were there at the birth of nu metal, and avoided the cliches that came later. Frontman Jahred 'MCUD' Gomes could actually rap unlike many of his peers, and the hip hop, reggae and dub influences woven throughout their self-titled debut album were both inventive and convincing.

42 TETRARCH
UNSTABLE (2021)

While the Korn and Slipknot influences are undeniable, Tetrarch's second album Unstable saw the Atlantans assert their own sense of identity across 10 tracks packed with colossal grooves and sing-alongs. Decidedly more in the camp that's all about pushing out club bangers than questionable hip-hop crossovers, Tetrarch are exactly the infusion of fresh vitality nu metal needs to make a proper comeback.

Tallah: nu metal, 2020s style

Chimaira: the bridge between nu metal and the NWOAHM

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41 SOULFLY
PRIMITIVE (2000)

The first two Soulfly albums are star-studded affairs, the likes of Chino Moreno, Fred Durst and Tom Araya all popping up on guest features. The gold medal goes to *Primitive*'s *Jumpdafuckup* though, which brought in Corey Taylor for an utterly colossal floor-destroyer. Elsewhere, tracks like *Back To The Primitive* and *Bring It* showed Soulfly could bring it even without added talent, Max Cavalera making full use of the mix of tribal beats, low-end menace and thrashy breakouts that had made Sepultura's *Roots* such a breakthrough.

40 ALIEN ANT FARM
ANTHOLOGY (2001)

Alien Ant Farm were the court jesters of nu metal's second wave, a bunch of goofy, gurning wackos who called their debut album *Greatest Hits* and whose biggest hit was a heavied-up but faithful cover of Michael Jackson's *Smooth Criminal*. But there was substance behind the gags – second album *ANThology* crackled with energy, attitude and a big shot of pop nous that saw them become radio staples, albeit fleetingly.

39 STATIC-X
MACHINE (2001)

Channelling the futuristic heaviness of Fear Factory into the brave nu world, Static-X's second album, *Machine*, was a slab of industrial molten metal. As a genre, nu metal was never famed for its ferocity but the Chicago crew combined danceable grooves with white-hot metal fury and a guitar tone to die for, topped off by the late Wayne Static's guttural bark.

38 DISTURBED
BELIEVE (2002)

Disturbed were shifting towards more melodic territory with their second album, while not losing sight of the sound that made *The Sickness* a multi-platinum success. But despite the increased emotional depth of the lyrics and David Draiman's voice taking on a much more anthemic bent, *Believe* couldn't quite escape the shadow of its predecessor. Ooh-ah-ah-ah-ah indeed.

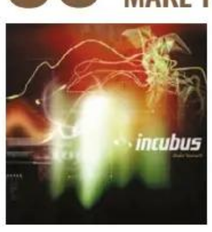
Mushroomhead: way more than Slipknot copyists

ANNAMARIA DISANTO/WIREIMAGE/GETTY

37 MUSHROOMHED
XIII (2003)

There more to masked Cleveland marauders Mushroomhead than the 'Slipknot copyists' tag, not least because they were out of the gate long before their Des Moines counterparts had even thought about buying red boiler suits. Their confusingly-titled fourth album *XIII* (so called because they had eight members) owes way more to Faith No More at their gnarliest and most inventive than any of their peers. Sadly, the nu metal town wasn't big enough for both the 'Head and the 'Knot, and there was only going to be one winner in that battle.

36 INCUBUS
MAKE YOURSELF (1999)



Dismissed as pretty-boy bantamweights by nu metal's knucklehead army, Incubus offered something more unashamedly spiritual and romantic than a man-baby in a red cap bawling about doing it all for the nookie. Their third album shared the same DNA as many of their peers – chiefly Faith No More – but the Californians refused to lock themselves into one single sound, throwing fleet-footed funk and sunset ballads into the mix. *Make Yourself* was a hit at the time to the annoyance of the scene's bro contingent, but its stature has only grown over the years.

35 MACHINE HEAD
THE BURNING RED (1999)

Naysayers may scoff at Machine Head for the nu metal-indebted *The Burning Red* but if you take your attention away from the garish tracksuits and ridiculous haircuts, their fourth album rips like a motherfucker. Robb Flynn's rapid-fire delivery on *Desire To Fire* and *From This Day* are undiluted adrenaline rushes, while *Silver* and *Five* are among the most sinister material the band have ever recorded. If it wasn't for the *Message In A Bottle* cover, we'd say there isn't a duff moment on it.

34 ILL NIÑO
REVOLUTION REVOLUCÍON (2001)

Coming in the aftermath of Linkin Park's *Hybrid Theory*, Ill Niño took that band's penchant for colossal, poppy choruses, beefed up the guitars and added a little Latino flair to the proceedings. For a genre that has occasionally dated terribly, the likes of the pulsating *God Save Us* and crunching flamenco flair on *Nothing's Clear* still sound remarkably fresh and have lost none of their bite. If you've got a taste for a chorus, *Revolution/ Revolución* is essential.

33 SEVENDUST
HOME (1999)

Lajon Witherspoon has a serious claim to have the best vocal performance in the history of the genre on this overlooked classic. His vocal trade-offs with both Chino Moreno (*Bender*) and Skunk Anansie frontwoman Skin (*Licking Cream*) are on the next level. Sevendust may not have the cachet of Korn or Limp Bizkit, but they remain one of the era's most beloved bands. One listen to *Home* and you'll understand why.

32 KITTIE
SPIT (2000)

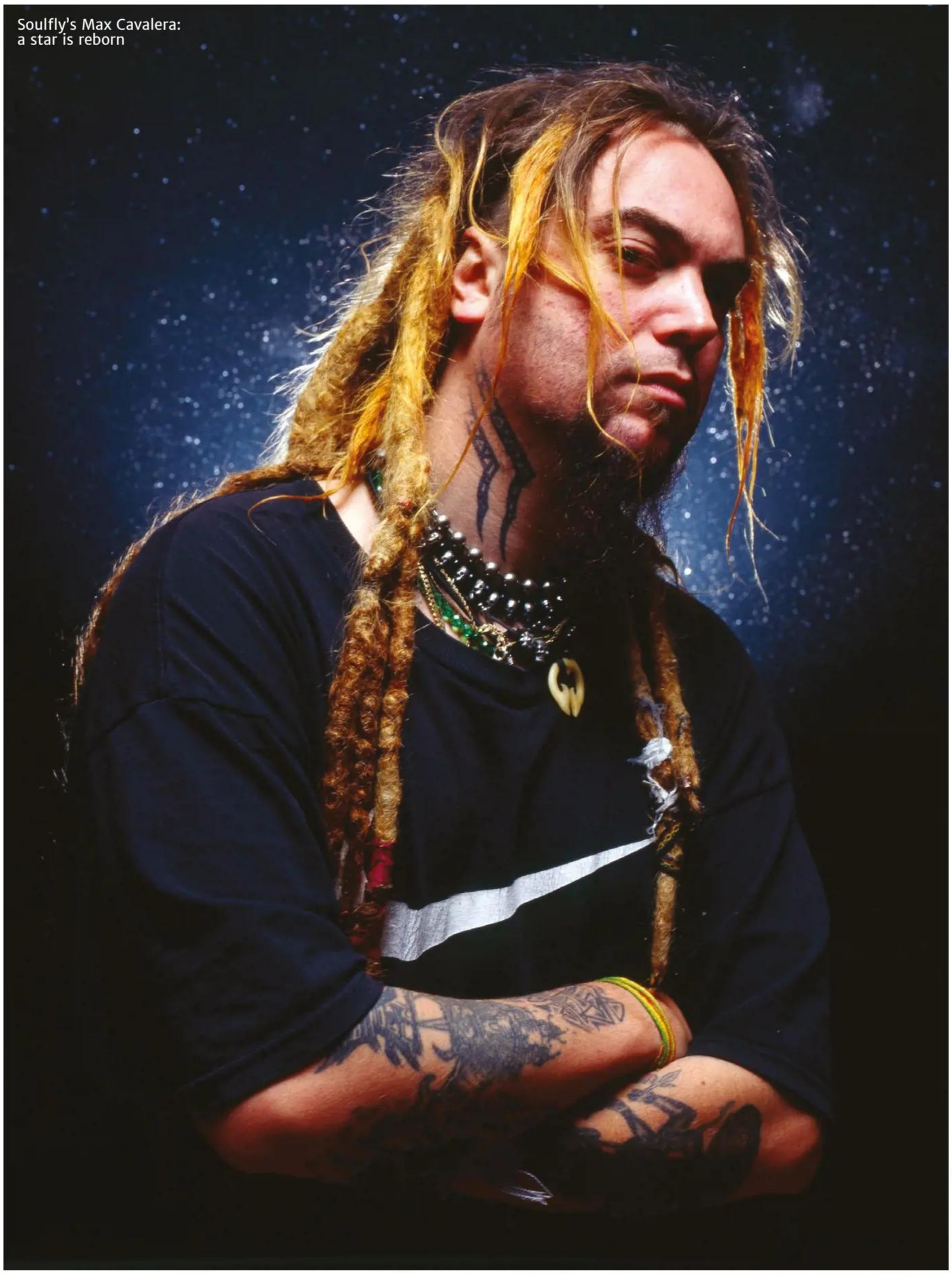
When Kittie released their debut album, *Spit*, in January 2000, it cut through the baggy pants bravado like a knife. Not only did it go harder and more aggressive than any nu metal album doing the rounds, with shades of death metal cutting through mountainous grooves, it also had thought-provoking and defiant songs like *Choke* and *Suck*, and sought to subvert gender expectations. And with *Brackish*, the band delivered nu metal's only genuine anthem of empowerment.

31 KORN
ISSUES (1999)

When *Issues* was released in 1999, it hit No.1 on the Billboard 200 the week it was released, keeping Dr Dre and Celine Dion off the top spot. It saw Korn return to the darker themes that they eschewed in the main on previous album *Follow The Leader*, while keeping the massive production sound that made that record such a hit. *Beg For Me*, *Make Me Bad* and *Somebody Someone* are as good as anything Korn have ever done, while *Falling Away From Me* is one of their very best anthems. The only reason it sits so low on this list is that the bar is so high.

30 SOULFLY
SOULFLY (1998)

Forged in the wake of turmoil – Max Cavalera had not only left Sepultura, but had also recently lost his son – the emotional charge of Soulfly's debut album is huge and overpowering in places. The Brazilian world music experiments of Sepultura's Roots era are taken to their logical conclusion here and with the ubiquitous Ross Robinson producing, the speaker-trashing low-end rumble is so earth-shakingly heavy it feels like you're listening to the metal equivalent of shifting plate tectonics. ▶



Soulfly's Max Cavalera: a star is reborn

NAKI/REDFERNS/GETTY

Disturbed's David Draiman: come and have a go if you think you're hard enough

29 SNOT
GET SOME (1997)

In 1997 nu-metal was yet to produce the cavalcade of characters that it became known for, which makes the fact that we only had a brief moment with Snot all the more galling. The LA band's debut album Get Some's funk rock suppleness, punk attitude and killer riffs were tied together by frontman Lynn Strait – a bona fide star in the making. Sadly his death from a traffic collision a year later meant it never happened, leaving one amazing album and a whole bunch of 'what ifs?'.

28 STAIND
BREAK THE CYCLE (2001)

Nu metal might have replaced grunge at the top of the totem pole, but the flannel influences remained well into the new millennium. Springfield, Massachusetts' Staind bridged the gap between Alice In Chains and Deftones, melding down-tuned riffs with emotionally-charged choruses with platinum-selling results. *Outside* remains an absolute banger, while the slow-burning *Its Been Awhile* is that rare thing, a nu metal power ballad.

27 DISTURBED
TEN THOUSAND FISTS (2005)

Disturbed had already turned in a cover of Tears For Fears' 80s hit *Shout* on their debut album *The Sickness*, but it was their pounding rendition of Genesis's *Land Of Confusion* on *Ten Thousand Fists* that really saw them hit their stride, setting the stage for their later smash-success with *Sound Of Silence*. *Ten Thousand Fists* also marked the last time Disturbed properly inhabited nu metal territory, producing some top-tier songs in the form of the title-track, *Forgiven* and *Stricken*.

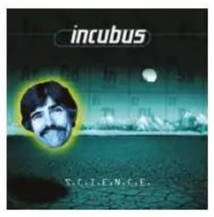
26 DROWNING POOL
SINNER (2001)

Drowning Pool had been toiling away in their native Texas and across the American South for five years by the time they released *Sinner*. Those early hard yards weren't wasted; most of the material on their debut album had been extensively road-tested and the record positively sizzled with urgent energy as a result. The crown jewel was their breakout radio hit *Bodies*, which remains one of metal's most iconic post-2000 anthems. Appearances on the Ozzfest tour spelled great things for them in the future, but the untimely death of singer Dave Williams all but halted their momentum before they'd truly got started.

25 P.O.D.
SATELLITE (2001)

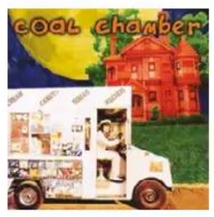
Devout Christians P.O.D. were outliers in the musical Sodom and Gomorrah that was the turn-of-the-millennium nu metal scene. But the San Diego four-piece's fourth album – released, inauspiciously, on September 11. 2001 – wore its faith lightly. The depth-charge boom of opener *Rise* and soaring single *Alive* proved they could mix it up with the godless heathens around them, but it was stirring, kids' choir-assisted anthem *Youth Of The Nation*, written in the wake of a tragic school shooting, that turned them into a beacon of hope in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Nu metal never sounded so positive before or since.

24 INCUBUS
S.C.I.E.N.C.E (1997)



Surely one of the most diverse-sounding bands in nu metal, Incubus owe a great deal to the pioneering spirit of Faith No More, not least in the silky vocal stylings of Brandon Boyd and the left-field inventiveness with a high premium placed on strong melodies and instant hooks. The Calabasas five-piece's second album, *S.C.I.E.N.C.E.*, was the sound of a band clearly developing into a world-class act, and includes a number of tunes that still pop up in Incubus's live shows more than two decades on: *Vitamin*, *Idiot Box* and *A Certain Shade Of Green*. For real feel-good innovation and a distinctly weird sense of humour, this record remains pretty hard to beat.

23 COAL CHAMBER
COAL CHAMBER (1997)



With their churning, primal debut album, Coal Chamber captured the nu metal zeitgeist almost perfectly. The thick, grinding riffage was an ideal foil to Dez Fafara's sometimes whispered, sometimes shrieked psycho-dramas, and ensured that with the likes of the hypnotic *Sway* and scorching trump card *Loco* they cornered the market in heavy music for spooky kids.

22 STATIC X
WISCONSIN DEATH TRIP (1999)

Maverick of hair and extravagant of beard, Static-X were a cartoon Ministry for the nu metal generation. Lacking both Korn's self-lacerating angst and Limp Bizkit's obnoxious bro-dom, the Chicagoans' debut album was never designed to be taken seriously. But *Wisconsin Death Trip* was a blast all the same – a glorious rush of grinding riffs and squelching electronics, with the much-missed Wayne Static howling about losers and serial killers like a swarm of hornets trapped in a wind tunnel.

21 DEFTONES
ADRENALINE (1995)

One of the great debuts of the 90s. Nu metal wasn't a thing until Korn and Deftones arrived on the scene and changed everything. Whilst both bands were responsible for shifting metal's aesthetics, Korn dealt purely in nihilism, pain and brutality. With *Adrenaline*, Deftones showcased influences from gangster rap to skate punk. Songs like *Bored* and *7 Words* became anthems of youthful alienation for a whole new group of kids, who were bored of grunge and wanted their own sound. They soon got it. ▶

Wayne Static: owner of nu metal's most ludicrous hairstyle

GETTY X2

20 AMERICAN HEAD CHARGE
THE WAR OF ART (2001)

One of the very best albums to ever come out of nu metal and still to this day one of the most overlooked. Unapologetically nasty, rhythmically ferocious and genuinely groundbreaking, *The War Of Art* is a bona fide masterpiece. Heavy, arty, catchy and filthy, there's not a single itch that this album doesn't scratch. Sure, there's a lot of Mike Patton's influence on here, but *The War Of Art* ranks among the best albums produced by Rick Rubin. Don't doubt it. Just blast it out loud.

19 LIMP BIZKIT
THREE DOLLAR BILL, Y'ALL (1997)

It's not got *Chocolate Starfish*'s silly swagger or singles, but *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all* makes up for that in sheer fucking venom. *Pollution* and *Leech* are the angriest, filthiest ditties Bizkit ever recorded, setting the scene for their Ross Robinson-produced debut. The cover of George Michael's *Faith* is goofy, yeah, but it still rocks. Over the album's duration Sepultura's *Roots* is evoked through John Otto's drumming, Borland's fretwork is at its most unhinged and Lethal's scratching is, er, lethal.

18 PAPA ROACH
INFEST (2000)

"Cut my life into pieces, this is my last resort," hollered human jack-in-the-box Jacoby 'Coby Dick' Roach on Papa Roach's immortal breakthrough single *Last Resort*. They'll have those two words carved onto their collective tombstone, but there was more to their second album than that one epic dancefloor filler: *Dead Cell* blazed with righteous anger, *Broken Home* was Jacoby's attempt to process his troubled childhood and *Binge* (*"All I need is a bottle/I don't need no friends"*) was a classic nu metal pity party. And a shout out to guitarist Jerry Horton, one of the great unsung nu metal six-stringers.

17 SEPULTURA
ROOTS (1996)

In what would be the swansong of their iconic lineup, the Brazilians delivered one of metal's most revolutionary albums. Fusing the sound they'd established on predecessor *Chaos A.D.* with the rhythms, percussion and Latin flavour of their homeland, plus a nod to the burgeoning nu metal scene, *Roots* exemplified the true, pioneering spirit of 90s metal. Any metalhead immune to the visceral thrill of *Attitude* and *Roots Bloody Roots* may be in need of a doctor's appointment.

16 KORN
UNTOUCHABLES (2002)

Korn have estimated *Untouchables* cost over $3 million to make. It sounds like money well spent, with the crunch of Brian 'Head' Welch and James 'Munky' Shaffer's guitars as savage as they have ever sounded, and Fieldy's bass low enough to shake the floor of the ocean. But that would be nothing without the songs themselves. *Hollow Life* was the first time the gothic noir that they now employ so well was heard, *Alone I Break* was unthinkably close to ballad territory for Korn, and yet it worked, and, of course, the mountainous groove of *Here To Stay* is one of the most loved moments in the band's career.

15 DISTURBED
THE SICKNESS (2000)

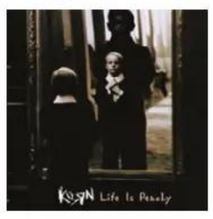
Whether through rock club DJ, music TV or stupid meme, most metal fans have heard Disturbed's *Down With The Sickness*. It was the ultimate 2000s nu metal anthem, boasting a giant hook, a massive um, disturbing breakdown and a whole lot of swearing. Then there were its similarly catchy cousins, singles *Stupify* and *Voices*, both reflecting the kind of Hot Topic angst that saturated the scene. Simple as they seemed on the surface, these songs hooked in a generation of fans who were new to heavy music, and excited to identify with a subculture that spoke to them. And let's not forget the impact of David Draiman – that double chin piercing was cool at the time, and his voice was just as distinctive.

14 MUDVAYNE
L.D. 50 (2000)

Let's face it. *L.D. 50*'s basically on here because of *Dig*. The deranged nu metal smash hit filled dance-floors and boasted a memorable video with an aliens- on-acid vibe. But the rest of the album was interesting in its own way, with hardcore and jazz influences popping up alongside Chad Gray's fearsome outbursts and the on-trend, downtuned guitars. It was co-produced by Garth 'GGGarth' Richardson and the band, and executive produced by none other than Slipknot's Clown, which could go some way to explain its manic energy. Rather than jumping on a bandwagon, the freaky, face-painted Illinois crew were riding their own.

Papa Roach and friends at the 'nu metal pity party'

13 KORN
LIFE IS PEACHY (1996)



The much-anticipated follow up to one of metal's greatest debuts, *Life Is Peachy* delivers. A far more experimental and occasionally wacky record than its predecessor, it does feature moments of genuine brilliance: *No Place To Hide*, the cover of Ice Cube's *Wicked* featuring Chino Moreno of Deftones, the unsettling *Mr. Rogers* and the manic *Chi*. But they're all topped by the savage *Good God*, which can lay a claim to being the best song Korn have ever written. It's just the silly bits in the album – a cover of War's *Low Rider*, the pointless drifting of *Porno Creep* and the expletive riddled *Kunt!* – that lets it down overall.

12 SLIPKNOT
IOWA (2001)

Comfortably the heaviest album that has ever topped the UK album chart, *Iowa* is a genuine one-off. Released in an era when it seemed the best way for a band to achieve commercial success in a nu metal dominated world was to make themselves seem poppier, cuddlier, cartoonish and maybe chuck an 80's cover in there as well, Slipknot became the ugliest band on the planet.

Iowa is an astonishing piece of work, as bleak, seething, furious and hate-soaked as metal has ever sounded in the mainstream. It's no coincidence that in the album's aftermath there was a direct rise in the amount of extreme metal that began to flourish within the scene – something that's hard to imagine happening without the blast-beats and death metal riffs of this record ushering it in. If that alone is *Iowa*'s legacy then it's a pretty awesome one.

11 LIMP BIZKIT
SIGNIFICANT OTHER (1999)

Fred Durst was the brat-prince of nu metal, and this was his crowning glory. Taking *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*'s abrasive racket and mollycoddling/expanding it (delete as appropriate to your bitterness), Bizkit transformed into a juggernaut. The Durstisms came thick and fast, our red-capped hero saying "yeah!" and "bab-eh!" instead of rapping, enlisting Method Man to take care of that on N 2 Gether Now.

The 'Realised that I'm worth more than that' in *No Sex* is essentially *Stacy's Mom* by Fountains Of Wayne, but 10 times better. *Don't Go Off Wandering*'s got gorgeous strings courtesy of Borland's brother Scott and the nasty, full-frontal riffing of *I'm Broke* is an unused gem from *Three Dollar Bill, Y'all*. The hits still rule – even a guy in a Darkthrone hoodie knows *Break Stuff* – and the Jonathan Davis/Scott Weiland guest spots on *Nobody Like You* have aged gloriously. This was the late 90s in 15 songs.

10 SYSTEM OF A DOWN
SYSTEM OF A DOWN (1998)

In 1998 the nu metal freight train was already running out of ideas; after the explosion of new sounds that Korn and Deftones brought in the middle of the decade, the bandwagon-hoppers were out in full force. It's no wonder that System Of A Down's self-titled debut album was so lauded in a scene that had come to rely on the likes of Coal Chamber and Spineshank, but that only really tells half the story.

System Of A Down is an absurdly brilliant record whoever you put up against it in competition. Spawning the anthemic likes of *Sugar*, *Suite Pee* and *War*, SOAD's debut is one of metal's finest opening statements. Punkier and rawer than they would ever sound again (clearly owing a great debt to The Dead Kennedys), it still has moments of fragile beauty, likes *Spiders*, that pointed to where they could go next.

9 DEFTONES
AROUND THE FUR (1997)

An album that turned Deftones into the hottest band on the planet, *Around The Fur* is more thoughtful and features greater depth than its rawer predecessor, *Adrenaline*. But still was as heavy as any metal band around, as heard on the breakneck *Lotion* or hearing Chino Moreno trading vocal lines with Max Cavalera on *Headup*. Crucially, though, *Around The Fur* features at least two of the times' most anthemic songs in *Be Quiet And Drive (Far Away)* and the awesome *My Own Summer (Shove It)*, which are still staples in their live set today.

8 LIMP BIZKIT
CHOCOLATE STARFISH AND THE HOT DOG FLAVORED WATER (2000)

Chocolate Starfish And The Hot Dog Flavored Water is possibly the most obnoxious rock record ever; the hits keep coming and there's not a lull until the 13th track, and that's just because *Hold On*'s subdued, Weiland-led tones aren't riposted by a man bouncing around in baggy trousers shouting *'FUCK! YEAH! ASS!'*

This album is stacked with killer moments. *Hot Dog* into *My Generation* into *Full Nelson*, *My Way, Rollin' (Air Raid Vehicle)*, *Livin' It Up*… imagine having the cheek to think that's acceptable behaviour. Any vestiges of experimentation were traded for songs basically everyone ended up knowing, whether they wanted to or not; so many people pretended to hate Bizkit at this point, stowing away copies of *Chocolate Starfish…* and doing the *Rollin'* dance in private. ▶

Limp Bizkit: out of the crapper and onto superstardom

System Of A Down: nu metal's weird brigade

GETTY X3

7 LINKIN PARK
METEORA (2003)

How do you follow an debut album that's as successful as *Hybrid Theory*? If you're Linkin Park, you don't throw away the formula that made you instant superstars, but you do tweak the doses. *Meteora* continued in the nu metal vein but dials down some of the teenage angst in favour of electronic experimentation.

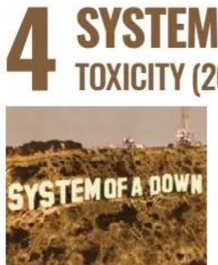
Lying From You and *Faint* were the sound of a band increasingly comnfortable in their own skin, though it's album closer *Numb* – later reshaped as a world-beating collaborating with rapper Jay-Z – that rubber-stamped Linkin Park's place in the pantheon of the 21st century's greatest rock bands.

6 DEFTONES
WHITE PONY (2000)

One of modern music's most challenging and definitive statements. *White Pony* turned Deftones from one of the best bands in a rapidly oversaturated scene into a genre all of their own. New member Frank Delgado brought a whole new set of subtle sonic touches to the band, Chino Moreno captivates throughout with a haunting, beguiling vocal performance and drummer Abe Cunningham keeps an irresistible rhythmic tattoo rolling from the first second till the last and even guitarist Stephen Carpenter, the one member openly unsure of the band's attempt to break free from the shackles of metal, manages to crowbar in enough jaw dropping riffs into the album.

The closest thing metal has ever had to Radiohead's *OK Computer*, and the most compelling reason for why Deftones exist in a bubble all of their own making.

5 KORN
FOLLOW THE LEADER (1998)



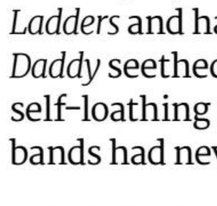
The allbum that turned Korn into nailed-on superstars. *Freak On A Leash* is almost certainly the song they are best known for, *Got The Life* is as bouncy as Korn have ever sounded, and, the likes of *It's On*, *Dead Bodies Everywhere* and *B.B.K.* are the first time we heard Korn meld the huge, precision production of stadium metal with their boom-and-burst dynamics to such crushing effect. There's filler, for sure: Fred Durst's turn on *All In The Family* has not aged well musically or lyrically, ditto the likes of *Cameltosis* and the cover of Cheech & Chong's *Earache My Eye*. It may be patchy in places, yet Follow The Leader remains a classic album, and an incredibly important one.

4 SYSTEM OF A DOWN
TOXICITY (2001)

Debuting at Number 1 in the US, System Of A Down's second album turned them from hot new band to one of the biggest names in the world of music. That it managed this feat without sacrificing one iota of the band's oddness is a stunning achievement.

Now that songs like the title track, *Prison Song*, *Aerials* and the career dominating *Chop Suey!* are so deeply woven into the fabric of metal it would be easy to forget just how bizarre and challenging those compositions are, but the fact they turned them into genuine generational anthems is a trick that maybe no other band can claim to have done. *Toxicity* has refused to age – it still sounds as weird, as wild and as inhumanly massive as it did more than 20 years ago.

3 KORN
KORN (1994)



A parade of copycats and bandwagon-hoppers who took the album's sound and remodelled it without an ounce of innovation that Korn possessed, but the original's legacy remains intact: this is a record that remains as integral to modern metal as the first Black Sabbath album or Metallica's Master Of Puppets.

Three decades after it was released, Korn's debut album instigated a seismic shift in metal. From the moment Jonathan Davis asked us if we were ready on *Blind*, it changed the landscape forever. They drew on the influence of Faith No More, Rage Against The Machine and hip-hop, but turned it into something brand new. *Ball Tongue*, *Divine*, *Faget*, *Shoots And Ladders* and harrowing closing track *Daddy* seethed with pain, rage and self-loathing in a way that metal bands had never expressed before.

2 SLIPKNOT
SLIPKNOT (1999)

Slipknot would go on to change and mutate, variously upping the brutality, pushing their material to arena-level, writing skyscraper choruses and anthemic, generation-defining songs. But they would never again sound as unhinged, unpredictable and consistently effecting as they did on their 1999 self-titled debut.

Has there ever been a more perfect opening to any album in the history of metal as the five-song run that kicks off Slipknot's self-titled Roadrunner Records debut? *(Sic)*, *Eyeless*, *Wait And Bleed*, *Surfacing* and *Spit It Out* – If Slipknot's career had ended right there then they would have done more than 90 per cent of other metal bands.

Despite protestations from a handful of nitpickers that it's front-loaded to its detriment, the entirety of Slipknot is a hell of a ride. It starts with the most furious, white knuckle pummeling imaginable before slowly descending, via the creeping and psychotically sick likes of *Tattered And Torn* and *Prosthetics*, to the eight-and-a-half-minute nervous breakdown of *Scissors* that closes the record.

Slipknot: the masked marauders

GETTY X2

1 LINKIN PARK

HYBRID THEORY (2000)

Oh, *Hybrid Theory*. You brilliant, banger-stacked, emotional beast. Just as it looked like nu metal was become a self-parody of wallet chains, spiky hair and sweaty angst, along you came to put it right back at the very forefront of heavy music, outraging countless elitists in the process.

While Korn and Deftones had already undermined metal's traditional themes and imagery and moulded its sound into curious new shapes, what Linkin Park created was something that would, in many ways, break the scene forever: a line in the sand drawn between those who 'got it' and those who abhorred it. The floodgates were opened for millions of new, unfamiliar faces to embrace metal's latest evolution, while many who had championed heavy music from the start refused to accept Hybrid Theory's inclusion into the genre's storied ranks.

Ultimately, the gatekeepers lost that particular battle. *Hybrid Theory* still sounds like it was made yesterday and remains a flawless album: one that produced four blockbuster singles in the shape of *One Step Closer*, *Crawling*, *Papercut* and In *The End*, shifted upwards of 25 million copies and rocketed its creators to overnight superstardom. Chester Bennington's passing in 2017 – and the immense outpouring of grief that greeted it – only went to further show just how large the shadow of his most famous work loomed.

Linkin Park's Chester Bennington: the shadow of his most famous work looms large

HIGHWAY TO HELL
SONIC YOUTH · LP
I STOLE MY SISTERS BOYFRIEND IT WAS ALL WHIRLWIND, HEAT AND FLASH. WITHIN A WEEK WE KILLED MY PARENTS
LEVEL
TOGETHER WE'RE
LOUDER
LOUDERSOUND.COM
CLASSIC ROCK
METAL HAMMER
PROG
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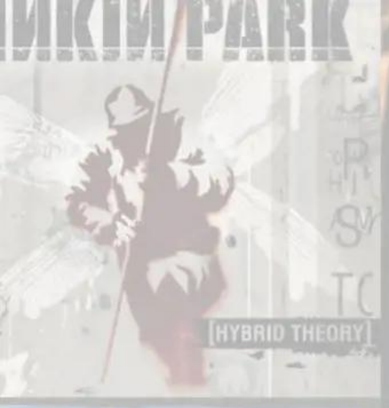
[HYBRID THEORY]

Slipknot

korn

P.O.D.
satellite

Korn
Follow the LEADER

SEVENDUST
Animosity

limp bizkit
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deftones
around the fur

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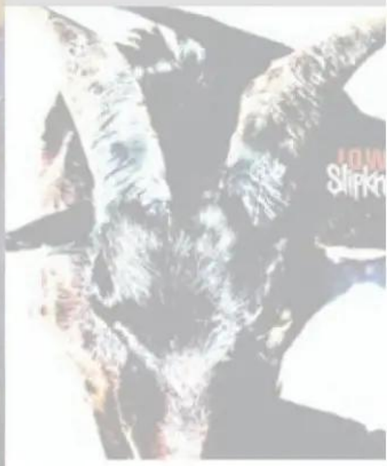
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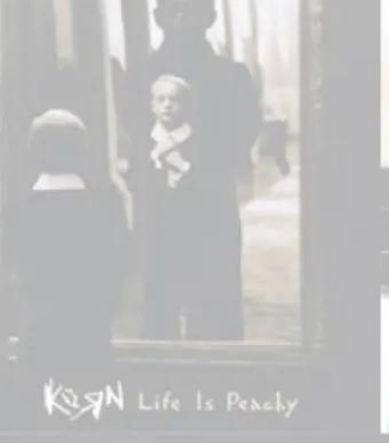
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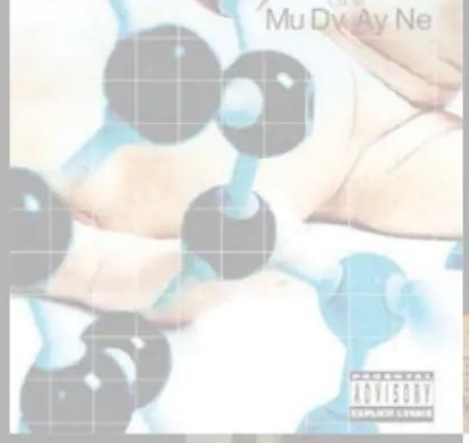
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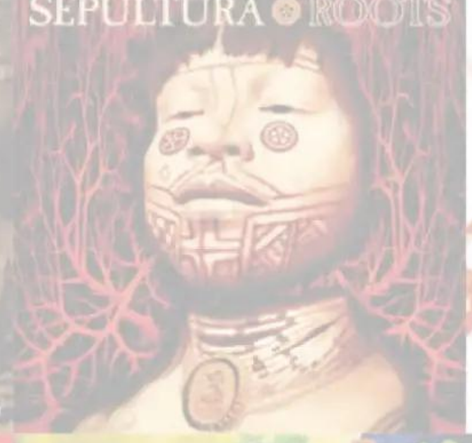
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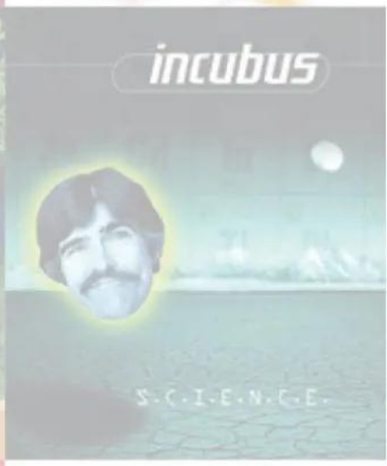
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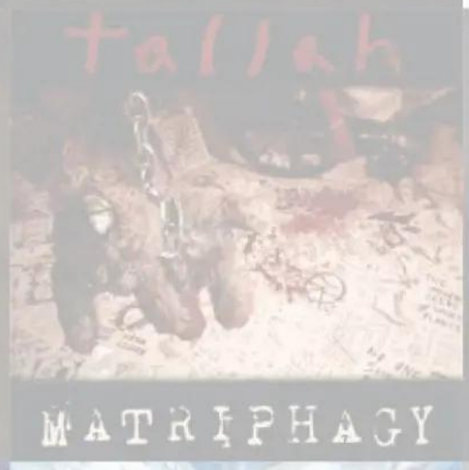
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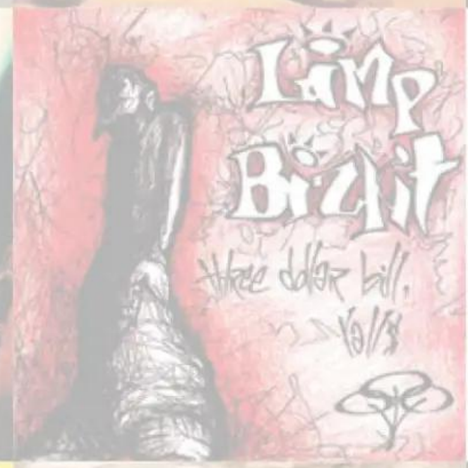
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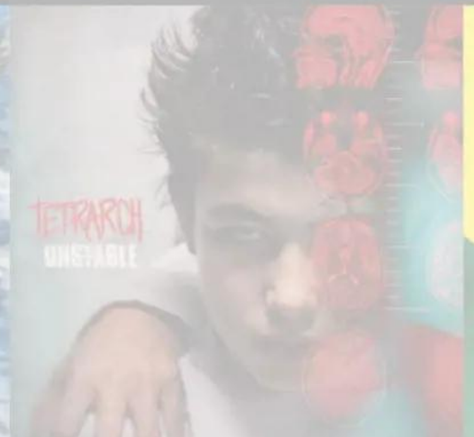
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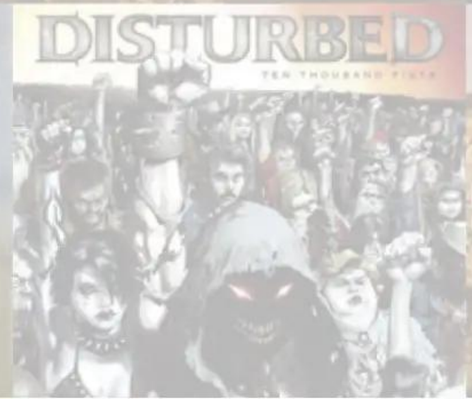
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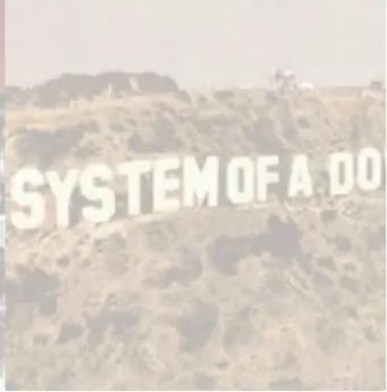
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